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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND THE THOUGHT OF GANDHI

MARVIN KEISLAR

B.A., College of the Pacific, 1937

THESIS

Submitted in the Department of the
Philosophy of Religion and Christian Theology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Pacific School of Religion

1940

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PREFACE

The subject of this thesis is complex and necessitates the dealing with many elusive problems. For a beginning student in the realm of philosophical research, the work in some ways has been an over-ambitious attempt. In spite of this the author has gained much through the enlargement of horizons relating to Christianity and Hinduism, through the deeper understanding of the problem and function of mission work today in India, as well as the information relating to the immediate problem of this thesis.

A special debt of gratitude is owed to John C. Bennett, major professor, for the use of several books from his personal library, but more especially for his helpful guidance, patience and kind encouragement.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Subject

The relationship between Christianity and the thought of Gandhi is an important subject for consideration for two reasons, one historical and the other practical.

During the early part of this century there was drawn to the attention of the whole world the effort of a young Indian lawyer to better conditions for his own people in South Africa. Years later he found himself leading a nation of three hundred million in a campaign of non-violent resistance against the greatest Empire in the world. Gandhi, who has been given the title of "Mahatma", or "Great Soul", by his devoted followers, has become an outstanding figure of history, and the leader of a potent historical movement. One of the many influences which have entered his life is Christianity, another historical movement which has world wide significance. The relationship between Christianity and Gandhi, then, is an important historical problem.

The other reason for the importance of the subject is that it concerns and lends light upon the practical aspect of missionary methods. The foreign mission movement has been under criticism in recent years, and interest in the project may be said to be in direct proportion with the decreasing financial contributions. This "case study" may be of help in providing data for a re-evaluation of the practical problem of missionary methods.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the relationship between Christianity and Gandhi's thought is not a single one. First, there is the problem of why Gandhi did not become a Christian, despite his close association with many Christian friends and their influence upon him. Since he did not become a Christian, a second problem is his attitude toward Christians and Christianity, and likewise a third would be the attitude of Christians toward him. A final problem is that of determining the common ground of Gandhi's thought and Christianity, determining also where the former has left orthodox Hinduism, and evaluating the influence of Christianity in the change of his thought.

In many other places biographies of Gandhi may be found, so his life will not be dealt with directly here. Neither will Gandhi's political philosophy or action be discussed, except as it is involved in his religious principles. Others have discussed at far greater length than would be possible here, Gandhi's principle of non-violence, so not more than general references to it are to be expected in this thesis.

The effort is made here to limit the problem to the relationship between Christianity and the thought of Gandhi, in influence, attitude, and result, with an evaluation of them all at the end.

Sources

The most fruitful primary sources of Gandhi's ideas

are his two volume autobiography, his writings in the magazine "Young India", which have now been compiled in three volumes, and quoted speeches and writings in various books and magazines. The best secondary sources on Gandhi are writings of C.F. Andrews, R.M. Gray, John Haynes Holmes, and many short articles in magazines. These last mentioned are good sources of Christian's attitudes, as are also articles of William Paton, Stanley Jones, Nicol Macnicol and many others.

While much has been written about Gandhi, most of it has been on his political leadership, some on his religious beliefs, but only a few references have been made to the relation between the Christian influences in his life, and his thought. There has been a little written on his attitude toward Christianity, but more is implied in his own writings. Of course many have written on their impressions of Gandhi, those who have known him a life time, and those who have made a hurried three month trip to see India. So it may be said, that the subject of this thesis has not been dealt with very fully before.

Method of Treatment

In order to understand the reasons for the relationship between Gandhi's thought and Christianity as it appears in recent times, one must know the background and influences of the past. In the next chapter will be discussed the

restraining influences of Hinduism, which seem to have been strong enough to overcome the Christian influences, at least to the extent of loyalty to the religion of Hinduism. In the third chapter the Christian influences which came very near to winning Gandhi over to Christianity, will be noted. The fourth, which is really the heart of the problem, will discuss the points of contact between Gandhi's thought and Christianity, and also the points of sharp contrast. Following that, Gandhi's attitude toward Christianity, which even now he recognizes as significant in his life, but which he criticizes sharply, will be analyzed. In the sixth chapter the attitudes of Christians toward Gandhi will be mentioned. In the last chapter, the seventh, the whole problem will be evaluated in four points. First, the influence of Gandhi's thought on Christianity will be discussed. Next the possible influence of Christianity on Gandhi's thought will be conjectured. In the third place the whole problem of mission methods, which Gandhi has criticized so strongly will be evaluated. Possible suggestions will be made in the light of this "case study". And fourth, the interesting problem of the value of Gandhi, a Christianized Hindu, to Christian missions will be mentioned. A summary of the thesis will bring it to a close.

CHAPTER II

RESTRAINING HINDU INFLUENCES

Even though Gandhi was subject to many Christian influences, as we shall see in the next chapter, he has not become a Christian. In understanding the relationship that exists between his thought and Christianity we must analyze the restraining influences of Hinduism which were strong enough to keep him true to his family faith. However, he cannot be accused of being ignorant of other faiths or people of other faiths, or of being racially or religiously prejudiced. He says, "A variety of incidents in my life

> have conspired to bring me in close contact with people of many creeds and many communities, and my experience with all of them warrants the statement that I have known no distinction between relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Musalmans, Parsis, Christians or Jews. I may say that my heart has been incapable of making any such distinction. I cannot claim this as a special virtue, as it has been in my very nature, rather than a result of any effort on my part."[1]

Although he claims that his only religion is the search for Truth,[2] early Hindu influences in his life are certainly affecting his thought.

His Mother's Influence

Gandhi went to England at the age of eighteen, and when he returned to India three years later he was deeply grieved

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1 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, vol. 2 (Ahmedebad, 1929) p. 55.
2 Ibid, vol. 1 (Ahmedebad, 1927) p. 7, 8, 87.
Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922, vol. 1 (Madras, 1922) p. 714.

to learn that his mother had passed away. She "was a devout Hindu, who had a deep religious faith penetrating and inspiring her whole personal life and character." From her more than anyone else he gained his own religious nature.[1] In his autobiography Gandhi's outstanding impression of her was her saintliness. She never missed her daily visit to the temple, or her regular fast periods. "She would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching. Illness was no excuse for relaxing them."[2] When as a young lad he was led by a friend to experiment with meat eating to see if it should harm him, he had to lie to his mother to explain his lack of appetite at meal times. "I knew I was lying, and lying to my mother. I also knew that if my mother and father came to know of my having become a meat-eater they would be deeply shocked. This knowledge was gnawing at my heart."[3] It was due to this agony of disobeying his mother's wishes that he resolved to be a vegetarian for the rest of his life. When Gandhi was preparing to leave for England, it was his mother who took him to a Jain monk to have the oaths of abstinence from wine, woman and meat administered. It was only after this sacred vow had been taken that she allowed her son to go abroad.[4] And it was her influence that

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1 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 13.
2 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad, 1927) p. 18-19.
3 Ibid, p. 60-61.
4 Ibid, p. 96-7.

helped him to remain true to his word. Gandhi was "pining" to see his mother when he returned from England, and the news of her death was such a severe shock that most of his cherished hopes were shattered.[1]

In trying to summarize the influence of his mother it may be said that it unconsciously restrained him to remain a Hindu. Perhaps his memory of her idealized her saintliness.

His Father's Influence

Karamchand Gandhi was truthful, brave and generous. He never had any ambition to accumulate riches and left very little property. His education was only what experience had taught him, and his religious training was meagre. However, he acquired a religious culture by visiting the temples and listening to religious discourses, and in his last days he read the Gita and repeated verses of it aloud.[2] His son found a deep pleasure in nursing him in his last days.[3] The younger Gandhi had stolen some valuables from his brother, and made up his mind to confess it to his father, but lacking courage to speak it, handed him a note as he was lying in bed with sickness. Tears wet the father's eyes as he read. For a moment he closed them in thought and then tore up the note. Gandhi says, "I could see my father's agony. If I were a

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1 Ibid, p. 206-7.
2 Ibid, p. 17-18.
3 Ibid, p. 44.

> painter I could draw a picture of the whole scene today. It is still so vivid in my mind. Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away.... He was wonderfully peaceful, and I believe this was due to my clean confession.... I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me, and increased his affection for me beyond measure."[1]

The influence of Gandhi's father has no doubt unconsciously been increased in Gandhi's later life due to his feeling of shame on the night his father died. He allowed his carnal desire to take him away from his father's bedside so that he could be with his child wife, and only a few minutes later word came that his father had passed away. "I felt deeply ashamed," says Gandhi, "and miserable.... It is a blot I have never been able to efface or forget, and I have always thought, that although my devotion to my parents knew no bounds, and I would have given anything for it, yet it was weighed and found unpardonably wanting." Undoubtedly this feeling of guilt made him more faithful than ever to the faith of his father. Here also may be seen a restraining influence.

Hindu Literature

As a member of an orthodox Hindu family, Gandhi was raised in the atmosphere of religious faith. Among the restraining Hindu influences in his life was the Hindu Literature which he slowly came to know. As a lad Gandhi became

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1 Ibid, p. 69-72.

acquainted with two plays which left an indellible impression on him. One was about the devotion of Shravana to his parents, and the other about Harishchandra's truthfulness. "To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me.... Both Harishchandra and Shravana are living realities," Gandhi confesses in his autobiography.[1]

When Gandhi was thirteen he was enraptured as he listened to a great devotee of Rama read the Ramayana to his father every evening. "That laid the foundation of my deep devotion to Ramayana. Today I regard the Ramayana of Tulasidas as the greatest book in all devotional literature."[2] Gandhi recognizes the power of early influences. He heard an uninspiring reader read from the Bhagavat as a boy, but it was not until later life when he heard it read by a Pandit that he found the value of it. "I wished I had heard it in my childhood from such a devotee as he is, so that I could have formed a liking for it at an early age. Impressions formed at that age strike roots deep down into one's nature."[3]

Although the Manusmriti[4] did not lead the young Gandhi towards a sure faith in God, and seemed to support him in his meat-eating, it did help him in establishing the principle of morality as the basis of all things, and truth as the

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1 Ibid, p. 24-5.
2 Ibid, p. 82-3.
3 Ibid, p. 83-4. Underlining mine.
4 Laws of Manu, a Hindu law giver.

substance of all morality. A Gujarati quotation of returning good for evil likewise gripped his heart.[1]

When Gandhi was in England he met two Theosophists who invited him to read the Gita with them. "The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth."[2] In another statement he shows his deep admiration for it.

> "When doubts haunt me, disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad Gita, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies, and if they have not left any visible and indellible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita."[3]

Religious literature which comforts, and which strengthens one's loyalty to Truth, especially when it has been in the religious environment since childhood, is recognizably a potent restraining influence.

Raychandbhai

When Gandhi returned from England and was met with the sad death of his mother, he was deeply impressed by a young man of twenty-five to whom he was introduced. It was not his phenomenal memory, but his knowledge of scriptures, his spotless character, and his burning passion for self-realization

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1 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad, 1927) p. 86-7.
2 Ibid, p. 164-5.
3 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions," Young Men of India, (Sept. 1925) p. 519.

that deeply touched Gandhi. Even though Raychandbhai was a commercial business man, dealing with thousands of transactions, his center of life was the passion to see God face to face, and Gandhi recognized him as a real seeker after Truth. Even though Gandhi met many religious leaders after that, no one ever made the impression that Raychandbhai did. "His words went straight home to me.... In my moments of spiritual crisis...he was my refuge."[1] He was one of the three moderns by whom Gandhi has been most impressed and captivated, and the only one of the three with whom Gandhi was in living contact.[2] When Gandhi was in a religious ferment in South Africa, being strongly influenced by both Christianity and Mohammedanism, it was a letter from Raychandbhai that pacified him, in which he asked Gandhi to be patient and to study Hinduism more deeply. "On a dispassionate view of the question," he said, "I am convinced that no other religion has the subtle and profound thought of Hinduism, its vision of the soul, or its charity."[3] Gandhi admits that it was largely due to Raychandbhai's influence that he took the vow of <u>brahmacharya</u>.[4] From this brief summary of Gandhi's contact with Raychandbhai it is evident that he was a strong restraining influence in Gandhi's life and thought.

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1 M.K. Gandhi, <u>Autobiography</u> vol. 1 (Ahmedebad, 1927) p. 207-210.
2 <u>Ibid</u>, p. 211-212.
3 <u>Ibid</u>, p. 321-322.
4 <u>Brahmacharya</u> -- means literally conduct that leads one to God. Its technical meaning is self-restraint, particularly referring to sex-restraint.
<u>Ibid</u>, p. 475-477.

Tolerant Nature of Hinduism

In the breadth of Hinduism, in which may be found both primitive superstition and deep religious philosophy, traditional orthodoxy and many reforming sects, Gandhi finds the freedom he needs to seek for Truth wherever it may be found. The fundamental beliefs of Hinduism may be found in all religions. "Every Hindu believes in God and his Oneness, in rebirth and salvation."[1] He does not say that the way of salvation of the Bhagavad Gita or the Upanishads is superior to the Christian or any other way, but constantly affirms that "all roads lead to salvation."[2] But he loves Hinduism for its tolerance. "Hinduism is not an exclusive religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets of the world.... Hinduism tells every one to worship God according to his own faith or Dharma, and so it lives at peace with all the religions."[3] Since Hinduism is the religion of his country, no other is needed to renew, consolidate and purify the national life.[4] Gandhi compares his feeling for Hinduism with that of his wife. It has faults, but it moves him, and an indissoluble bond is there.

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1 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922, vol. 2 (Madras 1922) p. 802.
2 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions," Young Men of India, (Sept. 1925) p. 523.
3 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922, vol. 2 (Madras 1922) p. 807.
4 R.M. Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, Mahatma Gandhi, (London 1925) p. 101.

He knows the vice and injustice, and is determined to reform them, but his zeal never takes him to the rejection of the essential things of Hinduism.[1] He believes in the essence of the caste system, i.e. the four main divisions, but denies any justification for the feeling of superiority due to caste,[2] and deplores the conditions of untouchability.[3] The other unique characteristic of Hinduism, cow protection, Gandhi feels, symbolizes man's sympathy for, and unity with the whole subhuman world.[4] But while Gandhi is a Hindu, and says that he loves Hinduism better than life itself,[5] and while much of his power comes from the completeness of his Hinduism, part of it also comes from his ability to rise above it. On one occasion he threatened his reputation by going against the Hindu doctrine of cow protection in having a calf killed to put it out of its misery.[6] He has a religion which is really beyond Hinduism. He explains what he means by religion.

> "It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within, and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human

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1 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922, vol. 2 (Madras 1922) p. 806.
2 Ibid, p. 802, 803. cf. Appendix I.
3 Ibid, p. 807-808.
4 Ibid, p. 804.
5 Ibid, p. 808.
6 F.J. McConnell, "What Shall We Think of Gandhi", Christian Century, May 13, 1931, p. 643.

> nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression, and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker, and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself."[1]

It is because Gandhi feels the freedom to take what he wants of Hinduism, to reform what he dislikes, and to be able to transcend its limitations, in other words, because he feels that Hinduism is tolerant enough to allow him to do as he pleases, that he is restrained to remain a Hindu. The earlier influences of his mother's faith and deep religious life, his father's forgiveness and love of the Hindu scriptures, and his own love of them, his contact with Raychandbhai, and many other minor influences, have all worked together to keep Gandhi true to his family faith. But it was not easy to do so, for there were many other influences that came into his life, among the most potent of which was Christianity, and it is to this subject that the next chapter is devoted.

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1 R.M. Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, Mahatma Gandhi, (London 1925) p. 104.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES

Christianity has become a world movement through its foreign missions, and has influenced people of all nations and races if it has not converted them. Gandhi is no exception. From the time he was a lad, Christian influences have been poured into his life, some bad and some good. In this chapter these Christian influences are to be stated and analyzed.

Early Memory

Psychology reminds one of the added significance of early experiences when attitudes are deeply rooted within one. We are told that an attitude strongly formed in early childhood is very difficult to eradicate in later life. With this psychological statement for a background, Gandhi's earliest memory of Christianity takes on deeper significance. His father was tolerant of all branches of Hinduism and sister religions. The young Gandhi was allowed to listen to some of the conversations that his father had with friends of other faiths. "Only Christianity was at the time an exception," says Gandhi. And he is frank to admit that he had a dislike for it. An experience at school helped to exaggerate this feeling. One day Gandhi happened to hear a Christian missionary, who used to stand near the high school for public meetings. The missionary was holding forth, "pouring abuse

on Hindus and their gods."[1] The young Gandhi felt deeply hurt at this, and never listened to the missionary again.

About the same time Gandhi heard of a well known Hindu being converted to Christianity. The rumor was spread that when he was baptized he had to eat beef, drink liquor, and change his clothes to European style. It was also said that he had begun to abuse the religion of his ancestors, their customs and their country. "All these things created in me a dislike for Christianity,"[2] Gandhi says in summarizing these early Christian influences. Their significance is undoubtedly great although it cannot be measured. But if the psychological truth stated in the first part of this section is valid, no evaluation of the Christian influences on Gandhi's thought will be complete without this early negative experience.

The Bible

When Gandhi was in England he happened to meet a good Christian in a vegetarian boarding house. After telling him about these early experiences with Christianity and realizing that they were not a true picture of it, he was invited to read the Bible. He accepted the advice, bought a copy, and began to read it. Although the Old Testament was difficult and dry reading, he read it all. "But the

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1 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 35.
2 Ibid, p. 85-86.

New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart",[1] Gandhi testifies. The section on passive resistance delighted him "beyond measure." The ideal in the Sermon on the Mount and its teachings Gandhi prizes greatly, and admits their deep impression on his life.[2] Gandhi wrote in an article in his paper, Young India, that his campaign of non-cooperation was justified partly because Jesus was a prince among passive resisters,[3] and at other times he freely quoted New Testament passages to show that the campaign was right and just.[4] It is interesting to note also that the opposition non-Christian party who did not agree with Gandhi, also quoted passages from the teachings of Jesus to show that non-cooperation would only bring disaster.[5] Before Gandhi went to prison he sent a message to the youth of India asking them to study the life and teachings of Jesus and to try to follow those teachings.[6] He told Hindu students once that their lives would be incomplete unless they reverently studied the teachings of Jesus.[7] Gandhi's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount

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1 Ibid, p. 167-168.
2 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions", Young Men of India, Sept. 1925, p. 519.
3 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922 vol. 1 (Madras 1922) p. 239.
4 Yohan Masih, "Jesus Christ in the Thinking of Asia," Missionary Review of the World, April 1924, p. 253.
5 Loc. cit.
6 Ibid, p. 255.
7 from a speech by Gandhi delivered in Colombo, quoted by C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 93.

is different from the orthodox, he admits, but if he were to face only the Sermon on the Mount and his interpretation of it, he says he would not hesitate to call himself a Christian.[1] There can be no doubt that the Bible and especially the life and teachings of Jesus have been a strong Christian influence on Gandhi's thought.

Other Christian Literature

But Gandhi is acquainted with and influenced by other Christian Literature than the Bible. When Gandhi was in South Africa he became acquainted with several Christians. One of them, Mr. Coates, of whom more shall be said in the next section, gave Gandhi many books to read. Gandhi recalls Dr. Parker's Commentary, Pearson's Many Infallible Proofs and Butler's Analogy. The first was stimulating morally, but of little help to Gandhi since he did not accept the prevalent Christian beliefs. Pearson's proofs were on behalf of the Bible as the author understood it and had no effect on Gandhi. Butler's Analogy argued for the existence of God, but Gandhi was already a theist. The arguments for Jesus as the only Incarnation of God and the Mediator between God and man left Gandhi unmoved.[2] During this period of religious ferment Gandhi wrote to Christian friends in England also. He was introduced to

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1 Loc. Cit.
2 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 288-289.

Edward Maitland who sent him a book he had written in collaboration with Anna Kingsford, The Perfect Way, which was a repudiation of the current Christian belief. He sent another book which Gandhi also liked, The New Interpretation of the Bible.[1]

Another book which came into Gandhi's hands was Tolstoy's The Kingdom of God is Within You. It "overwhelmed me," Gandhi confesses. "It left an abiding impression on me. Before the independent thinking, profound morality, and the truthfulness of this book, all the books given me by Mr. Coates seemed to pale into insignificance."[2] Gandhi made an intensive study of other books by Tolstoy. The Gospels in Brief and What To Do? impressed him deeply, and he began to realize the infinite possibilities of universal love.[3] The second of his farm projects for spiritual training was named "Tolstoy Farm" in honor of the influence of this Christian. Tolstoy is one of the three moderns who have impressed and captivated Gandhi, according to his own statement. Raychandbhai has already been mentioned, and the third is Ruskin in his book Unto This Last.[4] This book was given to Gandhi as he was leaving on a twenty-four hours' journey, and once he began to read it he could not lay it aside. "It gripped me...I could not get any sleep that

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1 Ibid, p. 322.
2 Loc. cit.
3 Ibid, p. 373.
4 Ibid, p. 211-212.

night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book."[1] Later he translated it into Gujarati. The book aroused some of Gandhi's deepest convictions, "that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all", that the work of all occupations is of equal value, "inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work," and that a life of physical labor is the worthwhile life.[2] The very next morning Gandhi began to make drastic plans to put these principles into practice, and made arrangements to move his paper, Indian Opinion, onto a farm where the workers would live on a bare maintenance.[3] There can be no doubt of the influence of this Christian literature on Gandhi's thought, when it makes such a radical change in his whole mode of life.

Christian Hymns

During his stay in South Africa, Gandhi frequently attended church services, and came to love certain Christian hymns. On one occasion when Gandhi had been assaulted by mistake by some of his fellow countrymen, and was left severely wounded in the streets he was rescued by a Christian friend who took good care of him. Gandhi made a request in writing that in order to lie down peacefully he would

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1 Ibid, vol. 2 (Ahmedebad 1929) p. 106.
2 Ibid, p. 107-108.
3 Ibid, p. 108-109.

like to have his friend's little girl sing his favorite English hymn, "Lead Kindly Light". His request was granted, and when he writes of the experience later it is with a sweet appreciation that it is recalled to mind.[1]

When C.F. Andrews visits the Sabarmati Ashram Gandhi is in the custom of asking him to sing a Christian hymn at the close of prayers. The two which he himself nearly always chooses are "Lead Kindly Light" and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". Andrews has also sung with acceptance "Nearer my God to Thee" and the evening hymn, "Abide with Me." The hymn, "Rock of Ages", Gandhi says, has been a very great comfort in hours of darkness and despondency.[2] Singing has been a prominent feature of Christianity, and its hymns have a strong influence in the lives of its followers and others by their ability to sing themselves into one's soul. Gandhi has admittedly been influenced in this subtle way also.

Christian Friends

By far the most important Christian influences in Gandhi's life are the personal contacts with many Christians, those life-long friendships where all boundaries and differences are transcended, and influence works freely and genuinely through the personal medium which no other can replace. Gandhi has been in contact with many more Christians

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1 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 77, 78.
2 Ibid, p. 83-84.

than can be mentioned here. Only a few of the more influential will be named.

Mr. A.W. Baker.- When Gandhi arrived in South Africa to take up his new work as a lawyer, he met the attorney with whom he was to work. Besides being an attorney, Mr. Baker was a lay preacher, and took a great interest in religion. He asked Gandhi all about his religious views during the first interview, and when Gandhi told him that he was still making a study of religion in order to determine what should be his belief, he invited him to join him and his co-workers at their one o'clock prayers every day. The next day Gandhi joined him and met the other workers. All kneeled down to pray, and petitioned God for various things according to the person's desire, such as a petition for the day to pass peacefully or for God to open the doors of the heart. A special prayer was added for Gandhi's welfare, asking that he may see the light and be saved. Mr. Baker long continued his correspondence with Gandhi. He finally gave up his legal work and became a missionary. In his letters he continued to dwell on the same theme of the excellence of Christianity, contending that one could not find eternal peace, without acceptance of Jesus as the only Son of God and the Savior of mankind.[1] When Gandhi did not move rapidly toward becoming a Christian, Mr. Baker was somewhat anxious. He took Gandhi to the

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1 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 281-287.

Wellington Convention, which was for the purpose of religious enlightenment. It may be called a "revival". Mr. Baker hoped that the atmosphere of religious exaltation and the enthusiasm of the people would lead Gandhi to accept Christianity. It was his final hope and firm conviction that God could not but listen to prayer fervently offered. Mr. Baker had to suffer many inconveniences for having a colored man as a companion, and even though he tried to hide them, Gandhi knew them all.[1] One can only estimate the influence that Mr. Baker had on Gandhi. Certainly it was not radical, but even though Gandhi did not agree with him, he no doubt admired Mr. Baker's simple faith, and appreciated his interest in him.

Mr. Coates.- One of Mr. Baker's co-workers was a frank-hearted staunch young man, a Quaker, named Mr. Coates. He and Gandhi used to take walks together and visited other Christian friends. It was Mr. Coates who gave Gandhi many Christian books to read. When these failed to convince him, he wanted to show Gandhi that he was superstitious because he wore the Vaishnava necklace of Tulasibeads which had been given to him by his mother. But he could not understand the symbolical and religious significance that the beads held for Gandhi. He wanted to convince Gandhi that even though there was some truth in other religions, that Christianity

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1 Ibid, p. 316-318.

represented the truth. Salvation was impossible unless one accepted Christianity, he believed, and one's sins could only be washed away the the intercession of Jesus. All good works were useless.[1] Although this argument could not convince Gandhi, he liked Mr. Coates. He was a God-fearing man and his heart was pure.[2] Of these early Christian friends Gandhi writes, "Though I took a path my Christian friends had not intended for me, I have remained for ever indebted to them for the religious quest that they awakened in me. I shall always cherish the memory of their contact."[3]

Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Walton.- Christian friends had whetted Gandhi's appetite for religious knowledge, and would not allow him to become indifferent. When Gandhi left Pretoria and went to Durban, Mr. Walton continued the Christian contact on his life. His manner was different from that of Gandhi's other Christian friends. He did not invite Gandhi to become a Christian, but placed his life as an open book before him, allowing him to watch all his movements. Mrs. Walton was very gentle and talented, and Gandhi was attracted to them. Even though there were differences which were quite fundamental between them, where there was tolerance and charity and a search for truth, even differences were helpful. Gandhi met them frequently, because he liked

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1 Ibid, p. 287-290.
2 Ibid, p. 293.
3 Ibid, p. 323.

their humility, perseverance and devotion to work.[1] Perhaps this attitude of the Walton's bore fruit in a later statement of Gandhi's concerning missionary methods. Or perhaps it was because Gandhi had this idea of missions that he was so drawn toward the Waltons who practiced it. In either case the Waltons had a far stronger influence on Gandhi than his earlier friends had had. In an address entitled "The Place of Jesus" Gandhi says,

> "We do not need to proselytize either by our speech or by our writing. We can only do so really with our lives. Let our lives be open books for all to study. Would that I could persuade all my missionary friends to take this view of their mission. Then there would be no distrust, or suspicion, or jealousy, or dissension amongst us in these religious matters, but only harmony and peace."[2]

Mr. Albert West.- Gandhi met Mr. West at a vegetarian restaurant in Johannesburg. He was a partner in a small printing press. When the black plague broke out, and Gandhi was nursing the patients, West offered his services, but as he was not needed as a nurse Gandhi asked him to take charge of his Indian Opinion press at Durban. This he did. He remained Gandhi's partner, sharing joys and sorrows until Gandhi had to leave South Africa. "He was a pure, sober, God-fearing, humane Englishman," Gandhi says of him.[3] West was loyal to Gandhi in all his work, and even though he found that Indian Opinion was not yielding a profit he

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1 Ibid, p. 370-371.
2 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 95.
3 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, vol. 2 (Ahmedebad 1929) p. 94-97.

stayed with it, and undertook the task of setting the books in order, collecting the arrears, and overhauling the whole arrangement. He never complained at all, and this made Gandhi feel indebted to him.[1] When Gandhi was considering moving the press onto a farm, Mr. West heartily approved, and worked unsparingly while singing hymns when there was a heavy burden of work during the first week.[2] His influence was not by argument or belief, but by the way he lived and served the cause he shared with Gandhi.

Mr. Henry Polak.- In the same restaurant in which he had met Mr. West, Gandhi met Mr. Polak, who was also connected with journalism and was attracted to Gandhi's proposal to do something about the plague. They came to know each other very well, and shared many ideas in common. Polak believed in the simple life, and it was he that gave Gandhi Ruskin's book to read.[3] He was determined to join Gandhi in his new venture on the co-operative farm. But when there was a need for more legal work at Johannesburg, at Gandhi's suggestion he left the farm and trained himself to be a lawyer to further Gandhi's cause.[4] Gandhi must have admired the loyalty of this Jew, and was no doubt influenced by his life.

Rev. J.D. Doke.- Mr. Doke was a Baptist minister, who volunteered his help in carrying the burden of Gandhi's cause

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1 Ibid, p. 104-105.
2 Ibid, p. 109, 112, 114-118.
3 Ibid, p. 103-104, 106.
4 Ibid, p. 122-123.

in South Africa. Gandhi was afraid that he was another minister to try to convert him to Christianity or to give advice, but as they got acquainted with one another their mutual affection and intimacy increased.[1] The Christian friend, mentioned earlier, who rescued Gandhi from the streets after he had been seriously wounded, and took care of him in his home was Mr. Doke. Day and night some member of the family would look after him. Indians flocked to the place to inquire about him, and Mr. Doke received them all, of whatever class, in his drawing-room with uniform courtesy and consideration. While living under his roof, Gandhi felt perfectly at home. Gandhi admired his courage to support the Indian cause so openly when the members of his church were not all sympathetic with it. Gandhi was deeply impressed with Mr. Doke's statement that he was doing this not as a matter of convenience, or to oblige the Indians, but as a religious duty, as a humble follower of Jesus representing Him to the Europeans.[2] Later Mr. Doke died while doing missionary work in Rhodesia, and Gandhi was asked to speak at a meeting which the Baptists held in his memory.[3]

On one occasion when Gandhi and C.F. Andrews returned to Johannesburg, even though there were numerous things to

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 78, 79.
2 Ibid, p. 77-80.
3 Ibid, p. 81.

to be done, Gandhi took Andrews to visit Mrs. Doke. Andrews describes the visit.

> "When he came to the house it was difficult for him to control his emotion as he saw Mrs. Doke in her widow's dress with her face pale and worn with suffering. She on her part treated him with all the tenderness of a mother, forgetting her own suffering in her anxiety about his health and that of Mrs. Gandhi... Then at last, after a little while, she told us the story of the death of her husband from a malignant fever, far away in the interior of Africa.... It was a narrative full of tragic pathos -- how they had tried to carry the dying saint into a hospital-station, where he could receive the best medical help, and how his life had suddenly ebbed away. Mrs. Doke had set out herself at once, in order to rejoin him and nurse him; but she had not been able to meet him before death came. The simplicity with which she spoke added to the sadness of her words. Mr. Gandhi, who had himself gone through far more suffering than most people, was clearly overcome, and the tears were in his eyes as he listened.
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> For many years since that day in Johannesburg I have lived in close companionship with him, and whenever he has spoken concerning Mr. and Mrs. Doke and their children, his reverence for that truly Christian family has been abundantly evident in every word he has uttered."[1]

C.F. Andrews.- Ever since an early meeting, in support of the non-violence movement in South Africa, held in Lahore, India, at which Andrews gave away all the money in his possession, he has been whole-heartedly behind Gandhi and his movement. It was not much later that Andrews went himself to South Africa to help in the movement.[2] Slowly there has grown up between the two a very intimate friendship. Gandhi in a letter to Kirby Page says of him,

> "Charlie Andrews is a man of prayer and faith.... We in India, who know him, call him Dinabandhu, Friend of the Afflicted. Our friendship is of long standing; we are

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1 Ibid, p. 81-82.
2 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi, His Own Story (New York 1931) p. 242.

like blood brothers. There are no secrets between us. Charlie is simple as a child, forgiving and generous to a fault. He is loving and lovable like a woman who is purity personified."[1]

Andrews has been with Gandhi much of the time since their first meeting, and probably he understands Gandhi and knows his thought better than any other European. He has edited a great deal of Gandhi's writings and speeches, and has written a great deal about him. Andrews himself is a deeply religious man, a loyal follower of Christ, and a friend of all in need. There is no doubt that a friendship as long-lasting and as deep as that existing between Andrews and Gandhi is a channel of influence of each upon the other.

Summary

The Christian influences that have played upon Gandhi's life and thought have been strongest when personified in a Christian like Mr. Doke or C.F. Andrews. However, the influence of ideas, like the Sermon on the Mount or the books by Tolstoy and Ruskin, also has changed the course of his life. The influence has not been positive, no doubt, when beliefs upheld were illogical or unappealing to Gandhi as in the case of Mr. Baker or Mr. Coates, or the missionary in Gandhi's childhood memory. However, the Christian influences have been strong enough to at least attract Gandhi to the essence of Christianity, and to cause him to value the reality of it when it bears fruit in life.

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1 Kirby Page, Religious Resources (New York 1939) p. 133-134.

CHAPTER IV

POINTS OF CONTACT AND CONTRAST

So far only background material has been presented. Hindu and Christian influences affecting Gandhi's life and thought have been mentioned. Now Gandhi's thought itself must be discussed. In this chapter will be shown the points of contact between Christianity and Gandhi's thought, and also briefly the points of strong contrast between the two. Two reasons why this chapter may not meet the expectations of the reader are, first, that Gandhi is not a theologian or even a logical thinker primarily, and he is not interested in stating a systematic philosophy of religion. His religion is a search for truth. It is a quest and not an organized form of belief. It is an experiment which is tested in living. Consequently it is hard to extract from his writings his thought on philosophical issues. The other reason for the difficulty faced in this chapter is that there is no absolute set of Christian beliefs, no one philosophy of religion or theology, with which all Christians would agree. It is difficult to find a norm except in general terms, and this will involve the second limitation of this chapter.

POINTS OF CONTACT

Freedom of the Spirit

One of the characteristics of Christianity is its emphasis on the freedom of the spirit of man. It is not

forced into any moulds or stamped into any pattern. Whenever the spirit of man has been tried to be regulated it has emerged still free. Gandhi likewise believes in this freedom of man's spirit, and he exemplifies this freedom in his own life. Even though he remains a Hindu, he transcends its limitations. He says that his religion is one

> "which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within, and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression, and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker, and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself."[1]

Gandhi then, believes that there is nothing that can come between the human soul and God, and nothing that is more important than the establishment of this relationship. This is a statement which demonstrates his belief in the freedom of the soul. Its similarity to Christian belief is seen in its correspondence to the statement by H.V. White, "Being Christian is a matter of first-hand intuition and response of the soul to God."[2] It is because Gandhi believes in the freedom of man's spirit that he is opposed to any forceful methods of argument or emotional upheavel in Christian evangelism. He makes his appeal for the free persuasion of open lives, which would not violate the freedom of the spirit.[3] Gandhi sees all sincere religions as aspirations

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1 R.M. Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, Mahatma Gandhi (London 1925) p. 104.
2 H.V. White, A Theology for Christian Missions (New York 1937) p. 32.
3 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, (London 1929) p. 95.

of the human spirit toward the divine. Among all followers he sees children of a common Father. "And all this is no mere intellectual affirmation, but a genuine sympathy with all that is good in man. We cannot imagine him feeling otherwise than at home in any gathering of sincerely devout people."[1]

For both Christianity and Gandhi the soul of man is a free spirit. This is the basis of their religion. Unity of all men is seen in the common freedom which they all share, and which only can be fully realized when devoted to the will of God.

God as Supreme

For both Gandhi and Christianity God is considered supreme at least, if not absolute. Gandhi apprehends God as "an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything." God is felt but not seen, and defies all proof because he is so unlike what one perceives by his senses. But even though he is not seen, he is felt to be real, just as many people in India do not know who rules or how or why, but are conscious of a power that certainly rules. Gandhi believes that there is orderliness in the Universe, governed by a Law which is not blind, "for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings." God is this unseen Law which

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1 R.M.Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, op. cit. p. 105.

cannot be denied, and from which there is no liberation, but which, when accepted as divine authority, makes life's journey easier. God is the unchanging Living Power that underlies all change, holding everything together, creating, dissolving, and recreating. Gandhi believes that this power is purely benevolent, for "in the midst of death life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists; in the midst of darkness, light persists." For Gandhi God is "Life, Truth, Light, Love, the supreme Good." But God satisfies the heart as well as the intellect, and this is done through mystical experience which must be preceded by an immovable, living faith. Gandhi recognizes his inability to understand the problem of evil rationally, but he believes that while God has no evil in himself that he is the author of evil and yet is untouched by it.[1]

Gandhi's description of God as Supreme might very easily be taken as a Christian's understanding of God, for God is here omnipotent, omnipresent, the Creator and sustainer of the Universe, author of evil, but supporter of goodness, and able to be known and trusted by faith. Surely this is a Christian God.

God as Personal

Even though all Christians do not believe that it is necessary to consider God as personal, and feel that they

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 43-45.

can have faith in an historical process, or an integrative force, the orthodox and average view is that God is our Father, a personal being interested in persons. Gandhi has several intimations in his writings of his belief in God as personal. At other times God seems to be somewhat pantheistic or identified with his higher self in an impersonal way, but these are some of the inconsistencies in his thought which he has not systematized. Once when as a lad he was tempted by an acquaintance to sin, he was prevented from it. Although he felt miserable at the time, since then he has felt that "God in His infinite mercy protected" him and "saved" him. A similar experience happened four more times during his life.[1] On another occasion when in England his companion saved him from sinning again by a sharp warning. He says, "I did not then know the essence of religion or of God, and how He works in us. Only vaguely I understood that God had saved me on that occasion. On all occasions of trial He has saved me." Gandhi's faith is in a God who is personally interested in him, who comes to his help when every hope is gone. His relationship to God is also very personal. "Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration

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1 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 62.

to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal."[1] In another passage Gandhi says that "God is personal to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is all things to all men."[2] Even though one may wonder if God is so variable as to be whatever man's needs want him to be, one can see here that Gandhi is anxious to think of God as personal enough to meet every individual's needs. Gandhi has said that this inner personal presence of God is what keeps him sane, free from pessimism, and able to enjoy an inexpressible peace.[3] God guides him when he waits silently upon Him, and it is only when this personal relationship is established that Gandhi finds the safisfaction of his soul.[4] Even though Gandhi is not recognized as being a Christian, in this fundamental Christian conception of God as personal there is a point of close contact. His close friend, Andrews, writes of their common belief in God:

> "In all my many intimate talks on religion with Mahatma Gandhi, amid many divergences and shades of contrast, I have never felt that there was any real difference between us with regard to this ultimate belief. Here we were on common ground. In this sense Mr. Gandhi is a theist and so am I; to both of us this belief in God is as certain and immediate as our own personal existence."[5]

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1 Ibid, p. 173-175.
2 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 46.
3 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions," Young Men of India, Sept. 1925, p. 524.
4 Ibid. p. 519.
5 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 34.

to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal."[1] In another passage Gandhi says that "God is personal to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is all things to all men."[2] Even though one may wonder if God is so variable as to fit whatever man's needs and wants Him to be, one can see here that Gandhi is anxious to think of God as personal enough to meet every individual's needs. Gandhi has said that this inner personal presence of God is what keeps him sane, free[3] from pessimism, and able to enjoy all the possible peace. God guides him when he waits silently upon Him, and it is only when this personal relationship is established that Gandhi finds the satisfaction of his soul.[4] Even though Gandhi is not recognized as being a Christian, in this fundamental Christian conception of God as personal there is a point of close contact. His close friend, Andrews, writes of their common belief in God:

"In all my many intimate talks on religion with Mahatma Gandhi, with many divergence and points of contact, I have never felt that there was any real difference between us with regard to this ultimate belief. We were on common ground. In this sense, he could be a theist and so am I; to both of us this belief in God is as certain and immediate as our own personal existence."[5]

Man as a Son of God

Although Christianity has often taken a very pessimistic view of the human situation and of the nature of man, there has always been a fundamental note of optimism that man is capable of becoming a son of God, perhaps only through God's grace, or by devotion or faith. Basically Christianity is optimistic about man's nature. Gandhi likewise believes in man. He is largely responsible for a statement such as this: "During the last thirty years... there has been in this land (India) a discovery or a recovery of personality."[1] Gandhi is making India conscious of human values, says Bishop McConnell, and it is an "undoubted fact... that it is regard for the sacredness of the human that has prompted Gandhi to lay stress on breaking away from modern economic bondage."[2] Even though Gandhi believes in the caste system, which seems so inhuman to the Christian, his attitude is not a contradiction to his belief in man as the son of God. He only accepts the four main divisions of caste, and feels that these should only define a man's calling and not restrict or regulate social intercourse. "The divisions define duties;" he says, "they confer no privileges. It is, I hold, against the genius of Hinduism to arrogate to oneself a higher status, or assign to another a lower status. All are born to serve God's creation--a Brahmin with his knowledge, a Kshattriya

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1 Nicol Macnicol, "Retrospect and Prospect", International Review of Missions, July 1925, p. 373.

2 F.J. McConnell, "What Shall We Think of Gandhi", Christian Century, May 13, 1931, p. 1644.

with his power of protection, a Vaishya with his commercial ability, and a Shudra with his bodily labour."[1] But caste does not absolve one from doing the duties performed by other castes, nor need there be any jealousy or feeling of superiority, for everyone has his individual duty to perform, and the work of all is equally valuable.[2] This democratic interpretation of caste makes Gandhi abhor the fact that any of his fellow men should be outcastes. "Untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of pity or love....I should be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes."[3] Gandhi's belief in the equality of all men is supplemented by his faith in man's goodness. In an address to a labor gathering, Gandhi spoke on the need for developing the moral or religious faculty, appealing to something that was deep within every one. He has faith in the power of love to turn away the hatred of the enemy.[4] He believes that there is something in man that responds to love. His whole doctrine of non-violence is based on tnis faith. Regarding a threatened Afghan invasion Gandhi rejects the popular attitude saying, "We must refuse to believe that our neighbors are savages incapable of responding to the finer instincts in man."[5] Gandhi believes, then, as does Christianity that all

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 36.
2 Ibid, p. 36-37.
3 Ibid, p. 41.
4 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922, vol. 2, p. 733.
5 Ibid, p. 720.

men are equal and that all men are basically good.

Ethical Nature of Religion

Christianity, being filled with the prophetic Hebrew tradition has long upheld the inter-relationship of religion and ethics. It is "an ethical religion which has a permanent motivation for life and furnishes essential conceptions and ideals for the regeneration of the individual and society. Its moral imperative and dynamic spring directly and inevitably from its essential character as a religion."[1] Kraemer, with his emphasis on Biblical Realism says that there is a Christian Ethic which has as its "prime motive and ultimate end" the doing of the will of "the living, ever-active God".[2] Christianity has tied together in its gospel of love, love to God and to man. Ethical relationships are inherent in its faith and life.

Gandhi likewise is deeply concerned about the ethical nature of religion, at times going so far as to say that they are synonymous.[3] He defines God in one place as "Ethics and Morality".[4] "The emphasis of his life is on the ethical in religion - on religion as a practice and a discipline rather than a body of truths."[5] His religious principles

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1 H.V. White, A Working Faith for the World (New York 1938) p. 54.
2 Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York 1938) p. 87.
3 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 390.
4 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 46.
5 Nicol Macnicol, "India Today," International Review of Missions, April 1930, p. 176.

are a blending of "inward acts of conscience which issue in outward acts of observance." He brings his inner principles immediately to the test of action.[1] Although Gandhi remains a Hindu, he is not content with the many unethical aspects of Hinduism. He is a purifier of Hinduism, and judges Hinduism's blots of character with a keen moral sense. The moral claims are supreme over tradition. It was the ethical teachings of the Sermon on the Mount that appealed to Gandhi when he studied the Bible. His religious principles of Ahimsa, Non-Violence, and Satyagraha, Soul-Force, are founded on faith in ethical forces. Whatever else can be said about their application it must be said that they have been to a large degree successful. Gandhi has been almost extreme in his assertion that religion must be practical, that it must work in life, and he is willing to undergo such great sacrifices as he has because he has faith that morality is the basis of all things.[2]

Christianity finds a common emphasis in Gandhi's religion, then, on the ethical nature of religion, and the moral claims that are put upon the individual.

Religious Imperative for Social Action

Another point of contact between Christianity and the thought of Gandhi is their common affirmation that religion

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 111.
2 M.K. Gandhi, op. cit. p. 87.

impels one to action on behalf of his fellow men. It is a natural outcome of their conception of religion as ethical. Although, for Christianity this social action has taken many different forms, such as evangelism, welfare work, education, political action etc. there is the common denominator of social concern.

Gandhi also feels the religious imperative for social action. He writes with conviction, "Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."[1] He has been accused by many who do not know him well of being an astute politician, hiding under a cloak of sainthood. But Gandhi is fundamentally a religious man. He says, "Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise. I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man....No work done by any man, no matter how great he is, will really prosper unless it has a religious backing."[2] In the Introduction to his Autobiography Gandhi says, "I should...like to narrate my experiments in the spiritual field, which are known only to myself and from which I have derived such power as I possess for working in the political field."[3] Gandhi's program of non-cooperation was expressed in terms of religion,

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1 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi - His Own Story, (New York 1931) p. 354.
2 R.M. Gray and Manilal B. Parekh, op. cit. p. 99.
3 M.K. Gandhi, op. cit. p. 4.

not because of any political advantage, but because it was truly religiously impelled. "I enter politics only in so far as it develops the religious faculty in me," says Gandhi. A program conceived in this religious spirit does not permit any compromise in things that matter.[1] Two examples may help to prove the point. When in South Africa Gandhi had planned a march of the Indian people as a mass demonstration against an injustice which was upheld by the British Government. "Just at this time there was a great strike of the European employes of the Union Railways, which made the position of the Government extremely delicate. I was invited to commence the Indian march at such a fortunate juncture," Gandhi writes, "and thus assist the railway strikers, and win on our own terms." This was a perfect situation for any one merely politically minded, but Gandhi was loyal to his religious principles of fairness, and informed the Government that he would postpone the march.[2] The other illustration of Gandhi's primary religious loyalty as the imperative for his social action is shown in his willingness to recognize his failure when he "put on the masses a greater spiritual strain than they were prepared all at once, even under his leadership, to bear...It is Gandhi's greatest glory, and the surest evidence of his spiritual stature, that he himself saw the reason of his

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1 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922 vol. 2 (Madras 1922) p. 650.
2 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. 246-247.

failure, and was the first to undertake the stupendous labor of its correction." This correction was to teach them the law of love, to make them spiritually worthy of their freedom.[1] Since then Gandhi has stressed in his Ashram of soul-force the primacy of religion. "Politics, divorced from religion, has absolutely no meaning... First we want to realize our religious consciousness, and immediately we have done that the whole department of life is open to us; and it should then be a sacred privilege of all, so that when young men grow to manhood they may do so properly equipped to battle with life."[2] Gandhi's religion is one of service, for it is only through service that he realizes God.[3] The object of Gandhi's service is India. He is a religious nationalist, but does not feel that there is any conflict between the two. He says "I simply thereby imply that the interests of my country are identical with those of my religion."[4] Although the social implications of Gandhi's life and teachings are not alien to Hinduism,[5] Gandhi's active religion of service takes on a new note in its religious imperative for social action. This it shares with Christianity.

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1 John Haynes Holmes, "Introduction" in C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 20-21.
2 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 110.
3 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 370.
4 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922 vol. 2 (Madras 1922) p. 681.
5 H.T. Muzumdar, "An Indian Replies to Bishop McConnell," Christian Century, Aug. 19, 1931, p. 1043.

Personal Life

A final point of contact between Gandhi and Christianity is their common ideal, in many respects, of the personal life. "Christianity is neither a philosophical speculation, nor an academic ethics; it is a life and life of active sympathy and human helpfulness."[1] In his personal life Gandhi could hardly be distinguished from a Christian. As a matter of fact his character is perhaps more "Christian" than that of many followers of Jesus. Gandhi has a philosophy of life or a religion that is quite complete and satisfying to himself. It

> "has made him to a rare degree sensitive about right and wrong. It has made him one of the most fearless of living men. It is most strange to him that anyone who believes in the soul should be afraid of death....Nor has he any fear of suffering....A religion which delivers a man from fear, and sets him so far above all scorn of any fellow-man, is a possession which anyone might envy."[2]

Gandhi's personal faith expressed itself during the Black Plague which threatened the population of Johannesburg in South Africa as follows: "It is my faith based on experience that if one's heart is pure, calamity brings in its train men and measure to fight it."[3] He believes that God saves him whose motive is pure.[4] His faith in God is shown on the occasion when he was rallying the Indian people to serve the

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1 H.V. White, A Working Faith for the World (New York 1938) p. 137.
2 R.M. Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, op. cit. p. 105-106.
3 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi - His Own Story (New York 1931) p. 177.
4 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 39.

British Government in the Boer War. The Indians were wondering what their service would be, how they would be treated, and whether their offer to serve would be accepted. Gandhi told them that if they had the will, God would grant them the ability to serve, and that their share of the responsibility was to train themselves for the work.[1] Gandhi's personal faith is "that the world does not quarrel with those who have a true faith in God and who understand the true nature of religion", but that "such men turn away the wrath of their adversaries by their gentleness."[2] Gandhi is very humble about whatever spiritual achievements he has reached, for the more genuinely spiritual they are the less room there is for self-praise, and the more humble he must be.[3] "The seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust."[4]

Gray has paid a very appreciative tribute to Gandhi's personal character. He says,

> "In his unworldliness, in his freedom from fear and anxiety, in that instinctive kindness which has made him through his life the friend of children and of the weak and injured, in his superiority to all personal rancour and resentment, in his refusal of force to resist any wrong done to himself, in the completeness of his self-mastery and his independence for happiness upon any outward things we see features of the Christian character."[5]

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 166.
2 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922 vol. 2 (Madras 1922) p. 733.
3 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 4.
4 Ibid, p. 9.
5 R.M. Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, op. cit. p. 104-105.

Gandhi is recognized by all who know him as a saint. He has been frequently compared with and likened to Christ, which is as strong an argument as can be advanced for his personal life as being a point of contact with Christianity.

POINTS OF CONTRAST

Even though Gandhi has many points in common with Christianity, it would not be the whole truth to leave the statement of the relationship there. There are several points of sharp contrast, and some Christians, Kraemer for one, feel that there is such a gulf between Gandhi and Christianity that common ground is only illusory.

"Swadeshi" Religion

Although Gandhi believes in the unity of God and his universality, he has a national interpretation of religion. While Christianity holds that the belief in a universal God requires one to believe in a universal religion, Gandhi believes that all religions lead to God, and one's duty is to be loyal to his particular religion. "Swadeshi" means one's own country, and Gandhi closely ties his religion up with India and its religion of Hinduism. Many orthodox Hindus do not hold that Swadeshi is an integral part of Hinduism as Gandhi believes. According to Andrews, this emphasis is peculiar with Gandhi. This principle of Swadeshi implies that one's own surroundings, his country, his religion, are preferred to others. To change one's religion is almost

inconceivable. There is a religious patriotism as well as national, and the two are fairly well combined. This helps to explain why Gandhi remains a conservative orthodox Hindu even though he is a reformer.[1] Swadeshi is based on the religion of Caste which Gandhi still believes in, although it must be said that his interpretation of it is much more humanitarian than the Caste system is usually believed to be.[2] For Gandhi this principle of Swadeshi is not upheld because of convenience, or to help the cause of the nationalist movement, but because it is basically a religious principle. "In this matter he is inflexible."[3] But the swadeshi principle not only includes religion but politics and economics also. This gives Gandhi a religious motivation for the political and economic freedom of India. He shows this to be his faith in an address given several years ago.

> "It has been urged that India cannot adopt Swadeshi in the economic life. Those who advance this objection do not look upon Swadeshi as a rule of life. With them it is a mere patriotic effort, not to be made if it involved any self-denial. But Swadeshi, as defined here, is a religious principle to be undergone in utter disregard of physical discomfort caused to individuals."[4]

Another statement of Gandhi's on his idea of Swadeshi answers the objection of its being selfish and narrow.

> "In seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth; but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a

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1 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 119-120.
2 see page 30, also Appendix I.
3 C.F. Andrews, op.cit. p. 120.
4 Ibid, p. 125-126.

> Within the piety of the common people of every land... there is this germ, the inalienable religious intuition of the human soul. The God of this intuition is the true God: to this extent universal religion has not to be established, it exists."[1]

> "For a part of the life of any living religion is its groping for a better grasp of truth. The truth which rectifies the faults of any religious system is already foreshadowed in its own search. Hence all fences and private properties in truth are futile."[2]

> "In respect to its theology and ethics, Christianity has many doctrines in common with other religions, yet no other religion has the same group of doctrines.... But there is no need -- it is a humiliating mistake -- for Christianity to contest priority or uniqueness in regard to these general ideas.... From this treasury of thought, however, Christianity proffers a selection which is unique. The principle of selection is its own peculiar character: its individuality lies in the way in which it assembles and proportions these truths, and lends to them clarity, certainty, exemplification and therefore power. Its features, like the features of a person, are unmistakably its own."[3]

On the other hand we have the Neo-Supernaturalist interpretation, of whom Kraemer is a good representative. Religious Truth is Revelation which can only be apprehended by faith. And Faith, "in this strictly religious sense, can only be appropriately defined as at the same time a divine gift and a human act."[4]

> "God was truly revealed in Jesus Christ, but at the same time He hid and disguised Himself in the man Jesus Christ.... The essential, absolutely unique feature in the revelation of God in Christ is that contrary to all human conceptions, God's revelation is an offence to man.... This is an offence to man, because all philosophy, all idealistic religion, all consistent mystical religion,

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1 Re-Thinking Missions, (New York 1932) p. 37.
2 Ibid, p. 44.
3 Ibid, p. 49.
4 Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York 1938) p. 69.

all moralism meet in one point. They constitute various endeavours for self-redemption, and instinctively reject the truth that God and God alone can work redemption."[1]

"We are constantly preoccupied with endeavours to bend the Christian faith and its content to the ways and structures of rational coherent thinking.... The Christian faith is indifferent to rational coherence in this philosophical sense, not because it is incoherent or necessarily irrational, but because, as the divine order of life revealed in Jesus Christ, it has a coherence and rationality of a quite different order, and is therefore, when formulated in the terms of a definite philosophy, only partly expressed and for a part strangled or distorted. The Bible... is rebellious against all endeavours to reduce it to a body of truths and ideals about the personality of God, the infinite value of man, the source of ethical inspiration.... It could not be better expressed that the essential message and content of the Bible is always the Living, eternally-active God, the indubitable Reality, from whom, by whom and to whom all things are."[2]

For Kraemer Religious Truth is beyond reason. It is a Revelation that must be accepted by faith. While Christianity is not the only religion of revelation, and while "there is a universal religious consciousness amongst men of all ages and climes and races,"[3] "the Christian Revelation places itself over against the many efforts to apprehend the totality of existence."[4]

"The universal religious consciousness of man has everywhere produced ... the most abhorrent and degrading filth that perverted human imagination and lust can beget. This fundamental and horrid disharmony, this dialectical[5] condition of man is called by the Christian revelation, as contained in Biblical realism, sin, guilt,

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1 Ibid, p. 70.
2 Ibid, p. 64, 65.
3 Ibid, p. 111.
4 Ibid, p. 113.
5 The "condition, inherent in man, of saying at the same time yes and no to his true destiny and his relatedness to the eternal." Loc. cit.

> competitive nature. 'Use your own property in such a way that you hurt no one else's".... It is for us, who are the custodians of a great Faith, to show that patriotism based on hatred 'killeth', but that patriotism based on love 'giveth life'."[1]

Gandhi's conception of swadeshi cannot be identified with nationalism as it is known today, although it frequently has been, for its religious principle must be recognized. While Christianity can be sympathetic with this attitude, and it must be, it cannot agree with it. For Christianity, religion cannot be narrowed to national boundaries, neither can it tie itself so closely to a political and economic program with its necessary limitations, for it recognizes the unity of all men. The Christian mission movement and the world church are vital proof of this basic difference between the thought of Gandhi and Christianity.

Religious Truth

The previous discussion on the principle of swadeshi religion leads into the next basic difference of the conflict between Gandhi's and Christianity's conception of Religious Truth. Probably here more than among other topics being discussed, there is wide difference even among Christians. On the one hand in Re-Thinking Missions we find statements like the following:

> "If there were not at the core of all the creeds a nucleus of religious truth, neither Christianity nor any other faith would have anything to build on.

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1 Ibid, p. 127.

lostness past recovery except by God Himself; and no other religion does this in such unmistakable and consistent terms. The universal religious consciousness of man itself nowhere speaks this clear language, because it is confused and blinded by its inherent disharmony."[1]

But even though Kraemer believes that Christianity has the truth, he insists that there is no room for a feeling of superiority, for it is "the denial of what God meant and did through the Gospel."[2]

We have taken considerable space to state the wide divergence among Christians on their attitudes toward Religious Truth, in order to show the difficulty of comparing Gandhi's attitude with that of Christianity. It is self-evident that Gandhi's attitude would be much nearer that represented in Re-Thinking Missions.

For Gandhi Truth is absolute, it is one with God. Speaking of Truth in this sense he means religious truth, although he does not make sharp distinctions between what is religious and what is not. Truth is the object of the search to which his life is dedicated. He feels that everyone has his own religion which is a private thing between himself and his Maker. Each one has a right to his own religion. Truth, then, is what each person discovers for himself. The degree of sincerity, humility, and earnestness with which a person enters upon this quest determines largely to what extent he discovers

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1 Loc. cit.
2 Ibid, p. 109.

Truth. The idea of Revelation is repugnant to Gandhi. He dislikes the Christian interpretation of the Bible as revealed truth, and is honest enough to see that neither can the Hindu books be considered as revelations of God. In his definition of his Hindu faith he puts it a little less strongly.

> "I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe the Bible, the Quran, and the Zend Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu Scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. Nor do I claim to have any first-hand knowledge of these wonderful books. But I do claim to know and feel the truths of the essential teaching of the Scriptures. I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense."[1]

Gandhi writes that he approached Christianity with prayerfulness, humility, truth and fear only of God, but came to another conclusion in his search. His conclusion was that "all religions were right, but every one of them imperfect, imperfect naturally and necessarily - because they were interpreted with our poor intellects, sometimes with our poor hearts, and more often misinterpreted.... If I want the satisfaction of my soul," he continues, "I must feel my way. I must wait silently upon God and ask Him to guide me."[2]

With this interpretation of truth, and of man's ability to discover it for himself, it is easy to understand why Gandhi is so opposed to Christian evangelism. He praises

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 36.
2 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions," Young Men of India, Sept. 1925, p. 519.

Hinduism's tolerance. It is not a proselytizing religion, but one which expands to include truth within it as it is found. "A Hindu refuses to change his religion, not necessarily because he considers it to be the best, but because he knows that he can complement it by introducing reforms."[1] He suggests that Christianity would be better served if missionaries would drop the goal of proselytizing, but continue their philanthropic work. He seems to suggest that Truth cannot be preached. It must be discovered. Undoubtedly Gandhi's attitude towards Christian evangelism was formed after meeting with numbers of Christians, probably very few of whom lived as humbly as he. Religious truth, he must have felt, cannot be preached with pride, but must be discovered in humility. Recognizing the apparent failure of Christians to maintain humility in their evangelism, it is not hard to understand Gandhi's attitude toward Christian religious truth, and his insistence on the absoluteness and veiled mystery of Truth, which is not revealed, but must be discovered.

Here, then, is a point of difference between Christianity and the thought of Gandhi. It can be more clearly shown in their respective attitudes toward Jesus Christ.

Conception of Christ

For Christianity, Christ is in some way, a revelation,

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 121.

an incarnation of God. For Kraemer the incarnation is "a free divine act of redemptive irruption into the life of man and of the world." It is an "offence to man", and for this reason, unique. It cannot be grasped by reason but must be accepted by faith.[1] Even after the revelation in the Incarnation, that which is revealed is still a mystery. The Incarnation is the decisive moment in world history.[2]

Another Christian interpretation of Christ is that of Hugh Vernon White. Jesus "was so completely one with God in thought and will and love that the reality of God as Personality is known when we know Christ." We can say that he is the Truth. "The crucial test of the ultimate validity of the revealer of God" is that he shall have not only "the right ideas and words, but also that he shall be in his spirit and character and personality the reality to which ideas and words refer."[3] "It is the conviction of the Christian that he finds God in Christ." God is to be found in every man in some degree, "but no other has exhibited the qualitative completeness of God's love and goodness and moral wisdom as does Jesus.... For a Christian to present to the world the Christian truth which centers and is realized in Christ is not a matching of idea against idea so much as it

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1 Hendrik Kraemer, op. cit. p. 70-71.
2 Ibid, p. 74.
3 H.V. White, A Working Faith for the World (New York 1938) p. 153.

is the offering of an historical illustration of what all the ideas are trying with greater or less success to represent."[1]

Gandhi readily acknowledges the influence of Jesus on his thinking. "Jesus Christ is a bright revelation," he said once, but not unique. "I cannot set him on a solitary throne, because I believe God has been incarnate again and again."[2] "Jesus occupies in my heart the place of one of the great teachers who have made a considerable influence on my life."[3] But Gandhi's conception of Jesus is nothing more than that of one of the great teachers of mankind. Giving his idea of the living Christ, Gandhi says that if it is the same as the historical Christ he does not feel his presence, but if it is used as a convertible term with God, then Christ is living and close. Then both Christ and Krishna live in him for they are convertible terms. He is not speaking of the historical Krishna, but the seer, the giver of the Gita, yet even something less definable than that. He believes in Christ as an indefinable essence. It is the presence of this living, speaking God within that keeps Gandhi sane, free from pessimism, and able to enjoy an inexpressible peace.[4]

Gandhi believes in the Hindu theory of the Guru, a

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1 Ibid, p. 154.
2 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 66.
3 Ibid, p. 92.
4 M.K. Gandhi, op. cit. p. 523-524.

spiritual teacher whom one enthrones in his heart, who is needed for spiritual realization. True knowledge is impossible without a Guru, Gandhi believes. But Gandhi says that he has never found one. He is ceaselessly striving after perfection.[1] If Christ did not fill this throne of Gandhi's heart, no one else did either, although his friend Raychandbhai came as close to it as anyone.[2]

Thus, we see here another difference between the thought of Gandhi and Christianity. While Christianity holds that Christ is central in its faith, revealing the character and will of God, Gandhi conceives of Christ as another great teacher of the world.

Sin and Salvation

Christianity is characterized by its deep moral and religious conception of sin, which is the result of man's freedom, and also by its offer of a way of salvation from sin, often misinterpreted as an easy way of escape, through the losing of one's self in the will of God. Although Christians at different times have believed that salvation was a magical transaction performed by the atonement of Christ, or else have gone to the other extreme and believed that it could only be assured by a life of asceticism and solitary self-discipline, the real basis of salvation from

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1 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 211.
2 Ibid, p. 210.

sin is the result of moral choice, a turning toward God, after repentance and confession. God is conceived as loving and forgiving.

Gandhi has not expressed himself very explicitly regarding his idea of sin. But it seems to be a passive state, rather than an active "rebellion against God". Failure to realize one's self might be Gandhi's conception of sin. Also he considers man's natural appetites, desires of the flesh, as sinful. But he says more about the positive element of salvation. He does not say that the way of salvation of the Bhagavad Gita or the Upanishads is superior to the Christian or any other way, for "all roads lead to salvation." However, the Hindu way, which he seems to follow rather closely is threefold. First, there is Bhakti or devotion. Second, is Karma, or action in accordance with Truth, and third is Juana, or knowledge. Only when there is complete correspondence between the three can one attain salvation.[1] Self-realization is his ideal, but he is very humble concerning his spiritual achievements.[2] One should dissociate himself from evil, he believes, in total disregard of the consequences.

> "He must have faith in a good deed producing only a good result: that in my opinion is the Gita doctrine of work without attachment. God does not permit him to peep

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1 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions," Young Men of India, Sept. 1925, p. 523.

2 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 4.

into the future. He follows truth, although the following of it may endanger his very life."[1]

The conception of Ahimsa, non-violence, impels Gandhi to dissociate himself from almost all his activities, for there is a conflict of two natures.

> "The spirit in me pulls one way, the flesh in me pulls in the opposite direction. There is freedom from the action of these two forces, but that freedom is attainable only by slow and painful stages. I cannot attain freedom by a mechanical refusal to act, but only by intelligent action in a detached manner. This struggle resolves itself into an incessant crucifixion of the flesh so that the spirit may be come entirely free."[2]

Self-denial is the path by which Gandhi arrived at his faith. His peace of heart and mind was measured by his self-denial. But it is only his faith which overcomes temptations.[3] The purpose of self-denial is purification of one's self and his surroundings. Gandhi wants to attain absolute freedom from passion in thought, speech and action, but this is a difficult path. "I must reduce myself to zero", he says. "So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him."[4]

Gandhi has stated very well in his own words his ideal of salvation. He says,

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1 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922 vol. 1 (Madras 1922) p. 714.
2 Ibid, p. 661.
3 Taken from a quotation of Gandhi in Anon. "Gandhi's Faith", Christian Century, Nov. 11, 1931, p. 1424.
4 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi - His Own Story (New York 1931) p. 354.

"I am a humble seeker after truth, impatient to realize myself, to attain spiritual deliverance in this very existence. My national service is part of the training I undergo for freeing my soul from the bondage of the flesh.... I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the kingdom of Heaven which is spiritual deliverance ....For me, the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and of humanity."1

In his statement of religious ideals, which in one way may be interpreted as his ways of salvation, Gandhi shows that they are accomplished through something that is within, a power which is evolved out of one.

"And whether we wake up this religious instinct in us through outside assistance or by inward growth, no matter how it is done, it has got to be done, if we want to do anything in the right manner, or to achieve anything that is going to persist."2

The difference between Gandhi's conception of salvation and that of Christianity is primarily in the method. Christianity emphasizes the moral and religious choice, accompanied by God's grace, while Gandhi stresses the individual attainment of self-realization through denial.

God Working in History

The last point of contrast between Gandhi's thought and Christianity to be mentioned here, although it is recognized that this does not make a completed picture of the differences, is of the conception of God as working in history. Christianity believes that God's purpose is revealed in his

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1 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 101-102.
2 Loc. cit.

judgments on the nations, that this world with all its sin and evil is an object of God's concern, and that from time to time God reveals himself in some particular historical moment, supremely in Jesus of Nazareth. For the Christian, God is the Lord of history. Here again Gandhi's silence makes it difficult to know his thought. But the idea of God which seems to emerge from his writings is that of an Absolute of Truth and Love, which is not revealed, but which must be discovered through patient and humble seeking. Gandhi also has a very personal relation to God in his own life as was mentioned in the first section of this chapter. But if one looks for any indication of his thought of God as the Lord of history he is almost sure to find none. Gandhi does believe that God is found through service, and in this way it might be said that he believes in God's presence in history, but even this is more the discovery of God within through outer discipline.

For Christianity, whose doctrine of God as working in history is one of its central tenets of faith, Gandhi's passive attitude is a point of sharp conflict.

Summary

In this chapter we have tried to point out the points of contact and contrast between the thought of Gandhi and Christianity. While the discussion is recognizably not exhaustive of either aspect of the relationship, it does point

out the general areas in which the relation is fairly clear. A broad statement of these areas may be that Gandhi's thought resembles Christianity in spiritual, personal, ethical and practical aspects of the religious life, but differs primarily in the intellectual formulations of religious truth, and the work of God in the world, in history, in Christ and the work of salvation.

CHAPTER V

GANDHI'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRISTIANITY

In the second and third chapters, the Hindu and Christian influences that entered Gandhi's life were enumerated. In the last chapter an attempt was made to objectively evaluate the points of contact and contrast between Gandhi's thought and Christianity. The purpose of this chapter is to state Gandhi's conscious attitude toward Christianity, which has influenced his thinking, and with which he has areas of thought in common, but which he has rejected as his religion, and with which he has many points of contrast.

Christian Beliefs

During Gandhi's visit to South Africa he came into contact with several Christians, some of whom were mentioned in chapter three. For the most part these Christians were of the fundamentalist type, stressing the way of salvation by belief, which in most cases was rather narrow. Mr. Baker upheld the excellence of Christianity to him, claiming that the only way to find peace was to accept Jesus as the only Son of God and the Savior of mankind.[1] But all the arguments that were advanced regarding the incarnation of God in Christ were unable to convince Gandhi.[2] Gandhi was disappointed in the belief of a Plymouth Brother that

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1 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 282.
2 Ibid, p. 289.

Christ would forgive his sins, and since man was naturally a sinner, he had to sin. But the brother was not troubled by his sins at all, and continued to sin voluntarily, assured that they would be forgiven.[1] As has been mentioned before, Gandhi was troubled by the Christian interpretation of the Bible, at least that of these Christians.[2] Likewise he could not agree with their interpretation of the efficacy of prayer,[3] or their belief that salvation depended upon one's becoming a Christian.[4] Gandhi could not accept the Christian belief concerning Jesus as the only Son of God, because he believed that everyone was a son of God. The idea that only those who believed in Christ would have everlasting life, Gandhi could not accept. He had to interpret Jesus' death metaphorically in order to believe in redemption.[5] Unfortunately among these early contacts with Christians, Gandhi did not meet any who were particularly philosophically minded in order to interpret the truths of Christianity to him in terms of something more understandable than tenets of faith which must be believed rigidly. For this lack Gandhi was able to say that philosophically there was nothing extraordinary in the Christian principles, that it was not the

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1 Ibid, p. 293.
2 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi - His Own Story (New York 1931) p. 132.
3 M.K. Gandhi, op. cit. p. 317.
4 Ibid, p. 319.
5 Loc. cit.

greatest or most perfect religion.[1] He shared his views frequently with Christians, but never received satisfying answers.[2] His attitude toward Christian beliefs was for the most part formed regarding these unphilosophical fundamentalist missionaries in South Africa. Gandhi was delighted at the faith of these Christians,[3] and respected them insofar as their religion was a genuine aspiration of the human spirit toward the divine.[4] He considers much of that which passes as Christianity a negation of the Sermon on the Mount, and here he is not referring to Christian conduct but to Christian belief.[5] After studying Christianity in humility and truth, he came to another conclusion.[6] So his attitude toward Christian belief may be stated as being satisfactory for Christians if it helps them to live a religious life, but that he must believe differently.

Mission Methods

Need for Humility.- Gandhi has many missionary friends, and is a kind critic of mission methods. In the third chapter there was quoted a passage of Gandhi's early remembrance

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 141.
2 M.K. Gandhi, op. cit. p. 320.
3 Ibid, p. 318.
4 R.M. Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, Mahatma Gandhi (London 1925) p. 105.
5 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 94.
6 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions", Young Men of India Sept. 1925, p. 519.

of Christianity as it was preached by a missionary near his high school. The attitude of that missionary was one of condemnation of the heathen, and a feeling of superiority. Gandhi criticized this attitude in an address to missionaries in which he said, "You, the missionaries, come to India thinking that you come to a land of heathen, of idolaters, of men who do not know God."[1] A while later he returns to this point.

> "I place these facts before you in all humility for the simple reason that you may know this land better, the land which you have come to serve. You are here to find out the distress of the people of India and remove it. But I hope you are here also in receptive mood; and if there is anything that India has to give you, you will not stop your ears, you will not close your eyes and steel your hearts, to receive all that may be good in this land."[2]

Gandhi closed his address with a plea for humility.

> "You want to find true men and women in India; and if you want to do that you will have to go to the lowly cottages -- not to give them something, but it might be to take something from them.... I speak to you what I feel from the bottom of my heart. I miss receptiveness, humility, willingness on your part to identify yourselves with the masses of India. I have talked straight from my heart. May I find a response from your hearts?"[3]

One criticism Gandhi makes, then, of Christian missions is that they lack humility, and are characterized by a feeling of superiority.

Dislike of Proselytizing.- Closely related to this criticism is Gandhi's hatred of proselytizing. He is not

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 74.
2 Ibid, p. 75.
3 Ibid, p. 77.

alone in this attitude. K. Natarjan, editor of the Indian Social Reformer, and Prof. Radakrishnan of the University of Calcutta[1] and the poet Rabindranath Tagore[2] all share his feeling. Tagore in writing to a young missionary has stated the position which all the above would share.

> "Do not be always trying to preach your doctrine, but give yourself in love. Your Western mind is too much obsessed with the idea of conquest and possession; your inveterate habit of proselytism is another form of it.... On the spiritual plane you cannot do good until you are good. You cannot preach the Christianity of the Christian sect until you be like Christ -- and then you do not preach Christianity, but love of God, which Christ did."[3]

Gandhi says it a little differently:

> "So we can only pray, if we are Hindus, not that a Christian should become a Hindu, or if we are Mussulmans, not that a Hindu or a Christian should become a Mussulman, nor should we even secretly pray that anyone should be converted but our inmost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Christian a better Christian.... If we have spiritual truth, it will transmit itself.... In spiritual matters we have merely to step out of the way. Let God work his way. If we interfere we may do harm."[4]

Gandhi feels that if Christian missionaries had refrained from "telling" India about Christ, and had lived his way of life as given in the Sermon on the Mount, that India would not have suspected them, and would have profited from their

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1 William Paton, "Concerning Evangelism in India," International Review of Missions, April 1926, p. 164.
2 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. App. III, p. 356.
3 Loc. cit.
4 quotation from Gandhi found in a book review of Daniel J. Fleming, Ways of Sharing with Other Faiths in Christian Century, June 11, 1930, p. 757.

in this situation. A charge, even of the lesser
[illegible], and that. Considerations of the [illegible]ity
of Calgacta can the poor [illegible] [illegible] all cases
his feeling. Hopes in writing to a young [illegible] my
wished the position which all the three would [illegible].

[illegible] not be always [illegible] to [illegible] your decision, but
give yourself [illegible]. Then [illegible] what to [illegible]
consonance with the idea of [illegible] and [illegible];
your [illegible] habit of [illegible] [illegible]
of it.... On the spiritual plane you [illegible] [illegible]
until you are good. [illegible] [illegible],
of the [illegible] must [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] you do not [illegible] [illegible], but [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible].

"But we can only [illegible], if we are [illegible], not [illegible]
[illegible] should become a [illegible], or if we are
[illegible], not [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] a [illegible], but [illegible] to [illegible]
[illegible] anyone should be [illegible] [illegible],
should be [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible],
[illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] a [illegible]
Christian.... If we have [illegible], it will
[illegible]... In [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] to [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible]
If we [illegible] we may do [illegible]."

Gemma finds that it [illegible] [illegible]
from "telling" Imia about [illegible], and had [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] [illegible], that [illegible]
not have [illegible], and would [illegible]

presence. He says, "I do not believe in people 'telling' others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith does not admit of 'telling'. It has to be lived, and then it becomes self-propagating."[1] In another place he says, "We do not need to proselytize either by our speech or by our writing. We can only do so really with our lives. Let our lives be open books for all to study."[2] Undoubtedly there are many cases which have not been true conversions, and Gandhi may be fairly well justified in doubting the value of proselytizing. His tolerance of religion aids his attitude, for he feels that if Jesus were to return today many who never even knew his name would be owned by him more than most Christians.[3] Proselytizing is another method of Christian missions, then, that Gandhi dislikes.

Denationalization.- Christianity has had the tendency to denationalize its converts, and Gandhi has strongly objected to this. In chapter three was mentioned another early memory of Gandhi's of a converted Hindu who gave up all scruples about eating meat and drinking liquor. He put on European clothes, and began abusing the religion of his ancestors. This exaggerated picture of conversion as being denationalizing has a certain degree of truth. Christian missionaries do represent another country, religion, and culture, and it has been difficult to distinguish the essential

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1 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. App. V, p. 359.
2 Ibid, p. 95.
3 Ibid, p. 76.

features of Christianity from them. Converts have naturally taken over much of the culture of the West with Christianity. Regarding this situation Gandhi remarks,

> "When I wander about throughout the length and breadth of India I see many Christian Indians almost ashamed of their birth, certainly of their ancestral religion and of their ancestral dress. The aping of Europeans on the part of Anglo-Indians is bad enough; but the aping of them by Indian converts is a violence done to their country, and, shall I say, even to their new religion.... Conversion must not mean denationalization. Conversion should mean a definite giving up of the evil of the old, adoption of all the good of the new, and a scrupulous avoidance of everything evil in the new. Conversion, therefore, should mean a life of greater dedication to one's country, greater surrender to God, greater self-purification."[1]

When Gandhi was in South Africa, he had a conversation with Abdulla Sheth, a sturdy Muhammadan patriot of the Indian community. Gandhi asked him if the Indian Christians did not help the other Indians.

> "'They!' exclaimed Abdulla Sheth in despair. 'They never care to come to us; and, to tell you the truth, we care less to recognize them. Being Christians, they are under the thumb of the white clergymen, who in their turn are subject to the Government.' This opened my eyes. I felt that this class should be claimed as our own. Was this the meaning of Christianity? Did they cease to be Indians because they had become Christians?"[2]

Gandhi, remarking once regarding the European dress of most of the Indian students in a particular college, said, "It is a great pity that Christianity should be mixed up with foreign dress and foreign ways of eating and drinking."[3]

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1 Ibid, p. 90.
2 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 395-396.
3 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. App. IV, p. 357.

However, there is a change rapidly coming over this situation, and Indian Christians are recognizing their true nationality. Even while Gandhi was still in South Africa Indian Christian youths volunteered to help in arranging a meeting to oppose the Franchise bill.[1] During Gandhi's tour of South India he was pleased to find that Indian Christians were taking a genuine but cautious interest in the Khaddar movement. In one place in a special address they assured Gandhi that while before they had not identified themselves with the national movement, that they had now decided to do so. Gandhi's reply was appreciative.

> "Acceptance of Christianity, or any other faith, should not mean denationalization. Nationalism need never be narrow or inconsistent with one's religious faith. That nationalism which is based on pure selfishness and exploitation of other nations is indeed an evil to be shunned; but I cannot conceive internationalism without a healthy, desirable national spirit."[2]

Gandhi, with his emphasis on Swadeshi, and his interest in India as a nation, dislikes the tendency of Christianity to denationalize its converts. However, this is rapidly being remedied.

Protection of Political Power.- Another serious criticism that Gandhi makes of Christianity is that of its coming under the protection of a temporal power. The overlapping

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1 M.K. Gandhi, op. cit. p. 331.
2 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. App. IV, p 358.

of Christian missions by

> "the forceful and pervasive environment of the British administration in India -- so that in many missionary stations there is very little outward sign of any distinction between the British civil rule and the Mission work -- has led to a painful and almost universal confusion about the essential meaning of the Christian Religion among orthodox Hindus and Muhammadans,"[1]

writes Andrews. Indian nationalists, who are not as sympathetic with Christians as is Gandhi, are intensely bitter about this identification of this Indian Christian community with the foreign political power.[2]

Gandhi says that missionaries have isolated themselves from the people they want to serve. He quotes a reply Lord Salisbury gave when a deputation of missionaries wanted protection in China. He said,

> "Gentlemen, if you want to go to China to preach the message of Christianity, then do not ask for assistance of the temporal power. Go with your lives in your hands, and if the people of China want to kill you, imagine that you have been killed in service of God!"[3]

Commenting on this statement with which he agrees, Gandhi says, "Christian missionaries come to India under the shadow, or, if you like, under the protection of a temporal power, and it creates an impassable bar."[4]

Summary.- These are the methods of missions of which Gandhi does not approve. He does not like the attitude of

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1 Ibid, p. 85.
2 Ibid, p. 86.
3 Ibid, p. 76-77.
4 Ibid, p. 77.

superiority with which missionaries come to India, nor the necessity for proselytizing. He believes that Christianity should not denationalize its converts, and that it should not come under the shadow of protection of the British government.

Attraction of Christianity

Gandhi is not wholly a critic of Christianity. There is much in it that he admires greatly. He is not a biased Hindu, "but a humble and impartial student of religion with great leanings toward Christianity."[1] He is familiar with the Bible, and is constantly quoting Biblical passages in his writings.[2] It undoubtedly means a great deal to him, especially the Sermon on the Mount. Although to him Jesus is not unique, he respects him highly, and frequently makes references to him as he writes.[3] Likewise Christian hymns are attractive enough to him to be quoted often.[4] These quotations and references are made in writings, it should be noticed, addressed not to Christians but to his Hindu followers.

Gandhi has had numerous Christian friends, and although many of these friendships have been unfruitful, many others

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1 R.M. Gray and Manilal E. Parekh, op. cit. p. 100.
2 M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions," Young Men of India, Sept. 1925, p. 521.
Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922, vol. 1 (Madras 1922) p. 237.
Ibid, p. 241 n.
Ibid, vol. 2, p. 792.
3 Ibid, vol. 1, p. 248.
Ibid, p. 635.
Ibid, vol. 2, p. 570-571.
4 Ibid, p. 594.
Ibid, p. 714.

have become precious treasures in Gandhi's life.[1] "In South Africa some of the noblest of the Passive Resisters were Indian Christians. No guests are more welcomed than certain loved European missionaries at Sabarmati. I have watched them with joy," Andrews says, "sharing the life of the Ashram."[2]

A religion which is believed and humbly lived by so many of Gandhi's friends has an undoubted attraction for him. While he was in South Africa he was strongly tempted to become a Christian. However, in later years he made up his mind that he would not try to change his religion. The last attempt he made to give Christianity a chance to convert him was in a visit he made to Kali Charan Banerjee, a great Indian Christian. Gandhi went with an absolutely open mind and in a receptive mood. He was earnestly seeking to find the truth. The discussion that was held was "very good, very noble." Gandhi says, "I came away, not sorry, not dejected, not disappointed, but I felt sad that even Mr. Banerjee could not convince me."[3] There might have been a subtle attraction that Christianity had for Gandhi which made him sad to feel that he could not really be a Christian.

Since that "final deliberate striving to realize Christianity as it was presented" to him, Gandhi's position is that

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1 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 89.
2 Ibid, p. 97.
3 Ibid, p. 72-73.

although he admires much in Christianity he cannot identify himself with at least the orthodox expression of it. He finds his comfort and peace in Hinduism.[1]

Failures of Christianity

Gandhi's attitude toward Christianity is affected by his feeling that Christianity has failed in many ways. He feels that the institution kills much of the spirit. When he attended church in South Africa his reaction was negative. He remarks,

> "The church did not make a favorable impression on me. The sermons seemed to be uninspiring. The congregation did not strike me as being particularly religious. They were not an assembly of devout souls; they appeared rather to be worldly-minded people going to church for recreation and in conformity to custom."[2]

Gandhi did not want to send his children to a Christian mission school for Indians, as he did not like the education given in these schools.[3] Whether this was due to a failure of the mission schools or to Gandhi's particular preference is not known.

Gandhi is very sharp in his criticism of the failure of Christianity in the civilization of Europe.

> "It is my firm opinion that Europe today represents not the spirit of God or Christianity, but the spirit of Satan. And Satan's successes are the greatest, when he appears with the name of God on his lips. Europe is today only nominally Christian.... Jesus' so-called followers measure their moral progress by their material

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1 Ibid, p. 73.
2 M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography vol. 1 (Ahmedebad 1927) p. 374.
3 Ibid, p. 462.

possession.... The last war (speaking of the war of '14-'18) however, has shown, as nothing else has, the Satanic nature of the civilization that dominates Europe today."[1]

Gandhi feels that Christians not only do not live their true Christian faith, but do not even believe it. Gandhi is here setting up the Sermon on the Mount as the norm of Christianity. If he had only to face his own interpretation of it he could even call himself a Christian. But he feels that much of that which passes for Christianity is a negation of the Sermon on the Mount.[2] When he was studying some Christian literature in South Africa he had to ask himself if that really represented Christianity. He felt from the deepest in him that it was not Christianity, because "it was unworthy of Jesus and untrue to the Sermon on the Mount."[3] In an address to students he warned them not to confuse Jesus' teachings with modern civilization. If one really believed in the Sermon on the Mount, Gandhi feels, he would have to take up sackcloth and ashes for his failure to live up to it.[4]

Gandhi's attitude toward Christianity is that of a friend who does not agree with it, but who criticizes it in a constructive manner. Still he respects it because he finds there some of his closest friends, because he was strongly

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1 Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 1919-1922 vol. 1 (Madras 1922) p. 237.
2 C.F. Andrews, op. cit. p. 93-94.
3 Ibid, p. 95.
4 Ibid, p. 96.

drawn to become a Christian himself. His attitude toward Christianity has been formed on the basis of Christian missions to a great extent. In his attitude will be found data for an evaluation of missions.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIANITY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD GANDHI

In discussing the relationship between Christianity and the thought of Gandhi, the picture would not be complete without a statement of what Christianity thinks of Gandhi. Since there is no official central body of Christianity which has issued such a statement it must be composed out of the varying expressions of those Christians who have come into contact with him. Since all Christians do not agree in their attitudes toward Gandhi, a coherent statement is not to be expected.

Gandhi's Religion as Nationalistic

Although Gandhi has frequently said that his religion is to find self-realization, and to discover Truth, he has implied also that his concern was primarily for India. Some Christians have interpreted his religion as really but a cloak for his nationalism. Kraemer writes:

> "Gandhi's motive is primarily nationalistic. Gandhi's notion about religions is that they are products of the national soil, Swadeshi-products, and that therefore it is incumbent on everyone to keep to his national religion."[1]

He thinks Gandhi's religion is dangerously near that of "the blood and soil religion."[2] Kraemer believes that under Nehru

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1 Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York 1938) p. 45.
2 Ibid, p. 46.

Indian nationalism is growing more and more out of its romantic phase which Gandhi has kept around it with his affirmation of the Peculiarly Indian values and ideals of its religion.[1] An interesting fact that Kraemer mentions is that in the temple in Benares which was founded by Gandhi's efforts there is a map of Mother India which is used as the sole object of worship.[2] Gandhi's religion is mainly nationalistic, with a social emphasis of conformity to certain customs and regulations.[3] Gandhi illustrates the religious confusion of our day, says Kraemer, by his misunderstanding of the real meaning of conversion,[4] and his insistence on religion as a national product. White says that Gandhi is essentially an Indian nationalist, and so wants all Hindus to be true to Hinduism.[5] But even if Gandhi's religion seems to be nationalistic, Andrews reminds us that in Gandhi's mind it is not interpreted as such, although many of his followers have mistaken it for nationalism. For Gandhi, his conception of religion goes back to the fundamental idea of Caste, which is called the Eternal Religion.[6] However, many Christians find it hard to understand this, and are content to call Gandhi's religion nationalistic.

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1 Ibid, p. 236.
2 Ibid, p. 243.
3 Ibid, p. 366.
4 Ibid, p. 238.
5 H.V. White, A Working Faith for the World, (New York 1938) p. 42.
6 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) p. 130.

Refusal of Christianity

It is natural for Christians to be perturbed when one who wields such great influence in India openly rejects Christianity. For Gandhi has repeatedly criticized Christian missions, and has said that Hinduism satisfies him. Although Gandhi is unashamed to recognize Jesus as one of the great teachers of the world, he does not place him in a unique enough position to satisfy many Christians.

> "Everyone who is familiar with conditions in the East knows that many non-Christian peoples have no objection whatever to recognizing Christ as one of the highest religious figures humanity has produced. To give Him an honourable place in the different pantheons does not meet with serious opposition. But to recognize Him and what He represents as the Lord of life, to whom supreme loyalty is due, is resolutely refused and rejected even by those who revere Him. Gandhi is a very clear example of this."[1]

The chairman of the meeting at which Gandhi delivered his address, often quoted or referred to in this thesis, on Christian Missions, was Dr. George Howells. After Gandhi had finished his address, Dr. Howells added a statement which showed his concern that Christianity be fairly represented. He said,

> "I do not think Mr. Gandhi has realized the heart of the Christian message, and perhaps we ourselves are to blame for that. We have not, as Christians, sufficiently revealed to the people of India, what has come home to ourselves with telling force, that Christianity is Christ, that our religion is nothing except in so far as men see in it Christ. It is not a creed, not a commentary on Christianity, not a philosophy, but a living abiding reality, going about where we go.... With all that I

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1 Hendrik Kraemer, op. cit. p. 289-290.

> have learned of Eastern philosophy, and Eastern thought Jesus remains a figure incomparable, unlike anything that India or any other country has produced. I say that we have failed to bring home a reality to the people of India, as a reality even to the Mahatma himself, that our Christianity is not merely a creed, but a life lived by faith in the Incarnate God himself, as revealed in Christ.... We must be consistent Christians before we can bring home to the people of India, to the Mahatma himself, what our religion stands for."[1]

It is because Christians believe in the complete uniqueness of Christ, which is an element of finality in their faith which cannot be eliminated, that Gandhi cannot accept Christianity. He objects to mixing proselytism with humanitarian service. He would like missionaries to do medical and educational work in a disinterested spirit. "But it is of the essence of our work that the Gospel is the best thing we can take to a man.... Ideally all our work...is an expression, as our Master gives us power, of that love of God in Christ."[2] For Christians, then, Gandhi's attitude of opposition to Christianity, conditions their attitude toward him.

Un-Baptized Christian

But Christians are not altogether negative in their attitude toward Gandhi. There are many who recognize Gandhi as essentially Christian in spirit, even though he does not accept Christianity as his belief. F. Heiler has called

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1 From the statement made by Dr. George Howells after Gandhi's address found in M.K. Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi on Christian Missions," Young Men of India Sept. 1925, pp. 525-6.

2 William Paton, "Missions in India Today," International Review of Missions, July 1931, pp. 398-9.

Gandhi an "un-baptized Christian." Kraemer, whose conception of a Christian is one who makes a decision for Christ and breaks with his religious past, feels very definitely that this term is misapplied to Gandhi.[1] Others, however, see in Gandhi distinctive Christian features. While Christianity has tried to make clear its identity by stressing outer signs of the spirit, these outer differences are seen to be relatively unimportant. Gandhi is a living example of this fact, says John Haynes Holmes.[2]

> "This saint of our own day is instinctively characterized by all westerners, who find themselves baffled by his utter and unique exaltation of the spiritual life, as the Christ of modern times. Trained to describe the virtues of the human soul in terms of the familiar Christ ideal, Christians in India find it impossible to present a just picture of the Indian leader except by comparing him to the pattern of the Nazarene. Bishop Fisher has testified that more than any other man whom he has met, Gandhi reveals to him the Christ."[3]

Others have compared him with Christ also. Col. Wedgwood writes:

> "One does not feel it blasphemous to compare him with Christ and Christ too one suspects gave infinite trouble to reasonable and respectable followers. For Gandhi is a philosophic anarchist - a new edition of Tolstoy without Tolstoy's past and a Tolstoy who has long since subdued Nature and shrunk into simplicity."[4]

Allan Hunter in his little book, Three Trumpets Sound, while he does not liken Gandhi to Christ, implies that Gandhi is

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1 Hendrik Kraemer, op. cit. p. 291.
2 J.H. Holmes, "Is America a Christian Nation," Christian Century, Nov. 25, 1931, p. 1484.
3 Loc. cit.
4 Statement by Col. Wedgwood quoted in Robert E. Speer, "Politics and Missions in India Today," Missionary Review of the World, April 1922, p. 260.

living like him, facing life in the same spirit and with the same trust and faith.

John Haynes Holmes is another admirer of Gandhi. He was accorded the privilege of writing the introduction for Andrews' edition of Gandhi's autobiography. In it he says,

> "The comparison with Jesus is inevitable and not merely from the standpoint of the non-resistant ideal which binds the two in perpetual fellowship. Long before the War the Mahatma was compared with the Christ for the sheer beauty and sanctity of his inner life. Now this comparison is immeasurably clarified and strengthened by the spectacle of what Gandhi is seeking to do for India and for the world. If we would know what Jesus was as a saint, and also what he did, or tried to do, as a savior, we have only to look across the seas to this greatest man in the world today."[1]

However, others do not think that this comparison is well taken. For Christ was a revelation of God, and Gandhi's efforts to free his nation are in a different direction from the work which Christ came to do.[2] Gandhi has taken opposite courses from Jesus on three issues, says another Christian. Gandhi inculcated the spirit of impatience rather than Christlike faith by promising dates for India's freedom. Jesus abandoned mass movements while Gandhi is the leader of millions, and third, Gandhi applied his authority in particular judgments instead of principles.[3] Nevertheless, many Christians consider him a better Christian than many of those who profess to be such. They would call him an "un-baptized Christian."

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1 John Haynes Holmes, "Introduction," C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi - His Own Story (New York 1931) p. 30-31.
2 F.J. McConnell, "What Shall We Think of Gandhi," Christian Century, May 13, 1931, p. 644.
3 F.F. Monk, "Religious Thought in East and West," International Review of Missions, Oct. 1929, p. 533.

Christianizer of Hinduism

There has been much controversy regarding the value of secondary Christianity such as that possessed by Gandhi. The permeation of Christian ideas and ideals into Hinduism and the East, says Kraemer, will not develop into a flourishing Christianity, but will be used by these other religions to strengthen their own positions.[1] Bishop McConnell on the other hand believes that even though Gandhi is a Hindu, and will remain a Hindu, that this permeation of Christianity into his thought will slowly have its effects upon the great body of Hinduism. "He belongs in that small group of Hindus who whether consciously or not, are making Hinduism Christian--in spots."[2] But McConnell also recognizes the outright Christianization of Hinduism as an impossibility. Blanche Watson, a correspondent for the Christian Century, writes, "Jesus is 'winning India' through Gandhi - and by that I mean the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of truth and love."[3]

Interpreter of Christianity

In the opinion of many, Gandhi is not only a Hindu saint, and not only a Christianizer of Hinduism, but also an interpreter of Christianity for Christians. J.S. Hoyland says in

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1 Hendrik Kraemer, op. cit. p. 290-291.
2 F.J. McConnell, op. cit. p. 644.
3 Blanche Watson, "India Confronts the Christian Conscience," Christian Century, July 23, 1930, p. 919.

his book, The Cross Moves East, undoubtedly with Gandhi in mind, "Hinduism may give us a fresh understanding and significance of the cross and of the manner in which the cross should be borne victoriously for the sake of the founding of the Kingdom of God."[1] Gandhi's doctrine of Satyagraha, soul-force, is "essential Christianity", says S.K. George. It implies the method of overcoming evil by suffering love, of winning an enemy to friendship by truth.[2] Perhaps Gandhi is showing Christianity that its ideals are really true.

> "When the ideals of Christianity have been declared to be impossible of practice, when they have been deliberately flouted for hundreds of years, the spectacle of large bodies of men and women following them, in letter and spirit, is almost incomprehensible. To some it is a farce pure and simple; to others it is the greatest manifestation of spiritual power ever recorded in history."[3]

Reinhold Niebuhr says that Gandhi's religious convictions are the first to work in the political field with "weapons and instruments which have been created out of and are compatible with religious resources."[4] Even if Gandhi's program should not succeed immediately, his method's efficacy would not be disproved.

> "Enough has been accomplished already to prove that spiritual and ethical forces can be much more potent

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1 Quoted in S.K. George, "Gandhi Lifts the Cross," Christian Century, Oct. 18, 1933, p. 1305.
2 Ibid, p. 1303.
3 Blanche Watson, op. cit. p. 919.
4 Reinhold Niebuhr, "What Chance Has Gandhi," Christian Century, Oct. 14, 1931, p. 1274.

> in political controversy than the presuppositions and practices of western politics admit. It is a rather sad commentary on the part of the world which calls itself Christian that the spiritual insights and ethical principles which lie at the root of its religion are much less potent in ordering the social life and influencing the struggle for social justice among us than in the orient."

It would be wonderful if we in the so-called Christian Western Civilization

> "could humble our pride sufficiently to appropriate from the east what we need most desperately,...a strong enough faith in the efficacy of ethical forces to achieve social justice without wading through blood to gain it."[1]

Gandhi is interpreting to the West some of the Christian principles which have laid dormant for centuries, by bringing them out into the open and practicing them, with the faith that they will work. However, if this is true, it is not to be understood that Gandhi is an interpreter for all aspects of Christianity.

Personal Character and Influence

The attitude of Christians toward Gandhi cannot be told without referring to him as a man. A world figure is not known truly by the headlines in the newspapers, or by articles written about him, but by personal contact with him. Many a world figure may have power or followers, but the true test of their greatness comes in the intimate relationships of their lives. While many who command millions hold their

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1 Ibid, p.1276.

power despite the unattractiveness of their personal character, Gandhi depends largely upon his life and his spirit to maintain his position of leadership. It is only those whose personal lives uphold what they profess that are worthy of sainthood. "Gandhi's reputation is more universal than that of the greatest statesmen and leaders of nations, and his personality more beloved and esteemed than any or all of them."[1] On Gandhi's seventieth birthday in 1939, there was presented to him a book of essays and reflections on his life and work, to which over sixty friends, from all over the world, representing many races, religions and creeds, contributed. This is an example of the respect with which Gandhi is revered, and the quality that his personal life must possess.

John Haynes Holmes quotes an earlier tribute of his to Gandhi in this book:

> "He is modest, gentle, unfailingly kind. His sense of fun is irresistible, his simplicity of manner captivating. Quiet, almost soft in his ways, he has an indomitable will and an iron courage. His sincerity is transparent, his devotion to truth inexorable. Having nothing to lose, his position is impregnable to attack. Sacrificing everything himself, he can ask anything of others. Material considerations, worldly cares and ambitions, have long since vanished from his life. The spirit, as manifest in truth and love, possesses him utterly. 'My creed,' says Gandhi, 'is service of God and therefore of humanity...and service means pure love.'"[2]

When Gandhi was in London for the Round Table Conference,

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1 S. Radhakrishnan, ed. Mahatma Gandhi (London 1939) p. 33.
2 John Haynes Holmes, "The Nature of Gandhi's Greatness," in S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit. p. 114.

he did not stay in a rich hotel, but in the poor section. Agatha Harrison, one of the workers at 88 Knightsbridge Rd., where Gandhi stayed, wrote of her impressions after being with Gandhi for a number of days. It is difficult to make a critical estimate, she said,

> "for when you meet absolute honesty and directness of purpose in a tangled world, you are in the presence of something that silences criticism."[1]

Gandhi makes the ways of governments difficult with his sincerity and directness.

> "He is the most disconcerting person to work with, but very human and lovable."[2]

John Macmurray values Gandhi's character highly.

> "One finds oneself wondering...how many of these international personalities will hold their place in the minds and hearts of future generations as significant figures in world history.... The one case in which I feel it impossible to have any doubts is the case of Mahatma Gandhi.... His influence depends almost wholly upon the integrity of his own personality.... He is perhaps the man in our world who has once again demonstrated, on an immense scale, the creative power of saintliness and of faith in the reality of moral principle."[3]

Such statements of appreciation of Gandhi's life and character could be duplicated again and again. Christians readily recognize, for the most part, the strength of Gandhi's character, and the breadth and depth of his influence. One Christian says that Gandhi has done more than any other to

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1 Agatha Harrison, "88 Knightsbridge, London," Christian Century, Jan. 4, 1933, p. 15.
2 Loc. cit.
3 John Macmurray, "Gandhi's Faith and Influence," in S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit. p. 174-176.

convert him from the closed mind and the finished faith by showing him the joy of the open mind in the infinite search for truth.[1] Everywhere one sees the influence of Gandhi's life reacting upon the lives of others for

> "in Mahatma Gandhi we have a volcanic personality, a moral genius of the first order, who has revealed to us all the hidden power of a living freedom from within, who has taught us to depend not on any external resources but on ourselves.... Such personalities as that of Mahatma Gandhi which can inspire a whole nation are rare indeed in human history."[2]

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1 W.E. Sikes, "Gandhi Converts a Missionary," Christian Century, June 11, 1930, p. 748.

2 C.F. Andrews quoted in Robert E. Speer, "Politics and Missions in India Today," Missionary Review of the World, April 1922, p. 260.

CHAPTER VII

EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

After having presented in the three preceding chapters the important factors in the relationship between the thought of Gandhi and Christianity, it is time to turn to an evaluation of the whole subject. Following this a brief summary of the thesis will bring it to its close.

Influence of Gandhi's Thought on Christianity

If Gandhi's thought has any influence on Christianity at all it is only because of a recognized greatness which everyone does not possess, a greatness which is due to the fact that Gandhi lives what he professes. He has practiced non-violence for a lifetime, hence what he says about it carries some weight. He has identified himself with the masses by his voluntary poverty in order to understand and help them, so what he says about the poverty of India is more than just words. Even though Christianity may not agree with what Gandhi thinks, it should be willing to listen, for Gandhi is a friendly critic, sympathetic, and interested in the broader welfare of all. Certainly his motives for criticism are not selfish. There must be a place in Christianity, it seems, to welcome such criticism. For Kraemer, Christianity is a water tight belief, which must be accepted because it is God's revelation, and which no criticism can

penetrate because the revelation is beyond all reason. Gandhi's thought, therefore, has no influence on Kraemer's conception of Christianity, because Gandhi is outside Christianity.

For the more liberal trend in Christianity, however, Gandhi's thought and criticisms are significant. William Paton says that many who feel that Gandhi is at least partly mistaken feel themselves challenged to self-examination by his criticism.

> "Behind those words there lies, plain to see, a certain resentment at what he feels to be an arrogant insistence that we are right and they wrong; to him we seem to be teachers only, learners never; he thinks we care too much about numbers; he feels that we are not free from racial pride."[1]

Christianity must be humble enough to accept honest criticism in order not to betray its spirit. E. Stanley Jones also believes in the necessity of self-criticism before criticizing others.

> "You cannot criticize Hinduism or Islam or India unless you first start with a criticism of yourself and of your own civilization. Then only can you put your finger on weak spots."[2]

But aside from recognizing the need of humility in the face of one whose humility is almost unsurpassable, Christians are influenced by Gandhi's positive life and character. One who has achieved such a rare degree of spiritual strength

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1 William Paton, "Missions in India Today," International Review of Missions, July 1931, p. 389.
2 E. Stanley Jones, "Christianity and Self-Government in India," Christian Century, Sept. 3, 1930, p. 1058.

outside of Christianity must by the very force of example make Christians reconsider their own faith to determine why it has not produced more men of such spiritual stature. Christians have also been influenced by Gandhi's deep concern for the poor masses. His spirit of service, and his willingness to sacrifice everything for a cause are almost revelations of what Christians should be willing to do.

While Christianity is not influenced much in its basic doctrines of faith by Gandhi's ideas, he has influenced many Christians by his suggestions concerning Christianity, his humility, his spiritual character and his life purpose of service.

Influence of Christianity on Gandhi

Whatever Christian influence there may be in Gandhi's thought is so intangible that any evaluation of it cannot be made in terms of degree but only in terms of direction of influence. Gandhi's active concern to do something constructive on behalf of his people seems to bear witness to certain Christian influence. Christianity is known in the orient as a religion of action. It is a plausible conjecture to attribute to Christianity Gandhi's activism. Muzumdar, a close Hindu follower of Gandhi's, says that "the social implication of his life and teaching is not alien to Hinduism."[1] But it is not unreasonable to suspect that Christian ideals

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1 H.T. Muzumdar, "An Indian Replies to Bishop McConnell," Christian Century, Aug. 19, 1931, p. 1043.

have made him conscious of the importance of social problems. He once said,

> "My fierce hatred of child marriage I gladly say is due to Christian influence.... Before I knew anything of Christianity, I was an enemy of untoubhability.... My feelings gathered momentum owing to the fierce attack from Christian sources on this evil."[1]

Perhaps Christianity has helped him form his humanitarian interpretation of the caste system, to which Gandhi still holds since it is the basis of Hinduism. Certainly Gandhi does not believe in the Hindu conception of a rigid status quo, but comes closer to the Christian concept of ethical relations based on freedom of the individual.[2]

> "The emphasis of his life is on the ethical in religion--on religion as a practice and a discipline, rather than a body of truths."[3]

Even though he believes in caste and tradition, he says they must yield to moral claims.[4] So while he remains a Hindu, his real religion is something that transcends Hinduism. "It is a purely ethical theism, which is at least as near akin to Christianity as it is to Hinduism."[5]

As has been already mentioned, Gandhi does not deny the influence of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount,

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1 Re-Thinking Missions (New York, 1932) p. 40.
2 H.V. White, A Working Faith for the World (New York, 1938) p. 57.
3 Nicol Macnicol, "India Today," International Review of Missions, April 1930, p. 176.
4 Loc. cit.
5 R.M. Gray and Manilal B. Parekh, Mahatma Gandhi (London 1925) p. 104.

the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin, and the lives of his sincere and devoted Christian friends. His Christian tendencies are noted with alarm by the more orthodox Hindus. He was publicly accused of reading the Bible too much, and the Bhagavad Gita not enough. His accuser said that if he had stayed in South Africa he would have become a Christian, and that his movement to allow the untouchables into the Hindu temples was a direct outcome of Gandhi's bible study and Christian tendencies.[1] Hindus accuse Gandhi's teachings of contradicting Hinduism's central tenets, saying that his leading ideas are not Hindu at all, but are borrowed from foreign schools of thought. "They resent, in particular, the Christian tendency of much of his thought, and roundly declare that the basis of his philosophy is not Aryan but Christian." They feel a menace in Gandhi's frequent references to Christ, and in the comparisons that are often made of them.[2]

Gandhi seems to gain much of his interest in labor justice, education, freedom of the press, and other Christian and Western ideals from his contact with Christianity. Since all these suggestions are only estimates of something intangible there is little assurance we can have that Christian influence had much to do with it. But at least it can be said that Gandhi's ethical emphasis, and his motive for active

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1 P.O. Philip, "Gandhi Seen as Near Christian," Christian Century, July 26, 1933, p. 962.
2 R.M. Gray and Manilal B. Parekh, op. cit. p. 106.

service were aroused and stimulated by Christian influences.

Mission Methods

So much has been written recently concerning the missionary approach, since it is one of the points of controversy today, that nothing that is said here claims to be very thorough or original. The conviction that prompts the inclusion of this section, nevertheless, is that Christian missions have not been careful enough in their approach. They have failed to show the gentle spirit of Jesus. In their eagerness to convert the non-Christians and to preach the message of life, they have forgotten to consider the effects of their preaching on the lives of the people. They have been too ready to use methods which may be called un-Christian. Missionaries have entered the field with a feeling of racial and religious superiority. A statement by Nicol Macnicol seems to represent the method of approach which is most consistent with Christianity, and which would be welcome to the non-Christian:

> "There is only one force that we are authorized to use in this cause, the force of friendship - only one bribe, the bribe of brotherhood.... There is no enemy of our message today more formidable than the racial antagonism and suspicion that is poisoning the air we breathe. The talk of the Nordic race, and of the 'white man's religion' creates a gulf of separation.... Every act or speech or attitude that outrages and insults the personality and that comes into conflict with the sense of personal honour and self-respect of this people, shuts the door of their ears against the word that we preach. And every foreign messenger on the other hand, who is knitting the hearts of the people

> of this country to his own, breaking down barriers, sweetening relationships, is the vanguard of the battle of humanity and of the Kingdom of God."[1]

Gandhi is one example of unnumbered non-Christians who were repelled from Christianity largely because of the methods used. We have noted that Gandhi was drawn closer to those Christians who lived rather than preached Christianity. His experience with Rev. and Mrs. Doke, his long friendship with C.F. Andrews, and many others show the greater influence that this open method of missions has. The new liberal emphasis on mission methods is one of sympathy, sharing, understanding and humility. Andrews gave up the earlier type of missionary methods for the more positive, constructive type. He describes it as follows:

> "It does not imply the pulling down of everything which the saints and sages of India with patient wisdom erected. Rather it implies the building up of all that is good. There must be first the humble work of a learner. Years of patient study and research would clearly be needed before the underlying beauty of Indian life as it has been lived through all the ages, can be understood. Without such understanding the physician's work of healing that which has become diseased in it would become impossible."[2]

H.V. White in dealing with this problem of mission methods comes to the conclusion that methods of force and argument, which have been used all to frequently in Christian missions, "inadequately represent and therefore misrepresent the nature

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1 Nicol Macnicol, "Retrospect and Prospect," International Review of Missions, July 1925, p. 376.
2 C.F. Andrews, "A Quest for Truth," Young Men of India, Nov. 1928, pp. 660-661.

of Christianity."[1] However, he suggests two methods which are in harmony with the inner character of Christianity and religious experience generally. The first, witness, is not to be confused with a mentally and emotionally coercive evangelism. By witness he means sharing "our insights, purposes, appreciations and hopes, in short the whole range of the spiritual life, with others."[2] "It violates no sanctity of human personality, it denies nothing in the nature of Christianity, and it is the natural means by which a living experience of God is communicated from the soul of one man to the soul of another."[3] The second method for missions is that of friendship. White says,

> "The method of friendship is true to the heart of Christianity. It does not represent a 'bait' used in the interest of proselyting; it is not a substitute for inner, spiritual religion; it is not a forgetting of God that we may remember man. It is rather the living of the Christian life and the communication of that life through living it. It is neighborliness."[4]

Gandhi would welcome this liberal emphasis on sharing and living our faith. Undoubtedly missionaries are adopting this attitude toward their work more and more.[5] Most of Gandhi's objections to Christian missions as given earlier

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1 H.V. White, A Theology for Christian Missions, (New York 1937) p. 29.
2 Ibid, p. 33.
3 Ibid, p. 36.
4 Ibid, p. 41.
5 In the findings and recommendations of the International Missionary Council that met in Madras, Dec. 1938, we find this liberal emphasis made. cf. The World Mission of the Church, (NewYork1939) pp. 40-47.

were written years ago. While undoubtedly there are still many of the more evangelical type of missionaries, against whom Gandhi has reacted, there seems to be a new realization of the necessity for mission methods that are in harmony with the inner spirit of Christianity.

In addition to these methods regarding the personal approach, at least something should be said about the more general factors, such as the confusion and compromise between the mission movement and economic and political imperialism. Andrews, remarking on this situation, writes,

> "There has been far too frequent compromise with western powers and far too great a readiness to assume a neutral attitude where neutrality meant surrender of vital Christian principle for the sake of material gain."[1]

In India the British government requires missionaries to be politically neutral, but appeals for support from them in matters of political expediency.[2] This confused relationship between Christianity and the ruling political powers has hindered the progress of mission work. Gandhi's opinion regarding this condition verifies the fact that Christian missions need to be very careful if they hope to have any influence.

Andrews reminds us of the danger of mission organization which may become so involved that the spirit is lost. The financial burdens may warp one's outlook, and the size

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1 C.F. Andrews, "Missions in India Today," International Review of Missions, April 1933, p. 191.

2 Ibid, p. 193.

of the organization may make it easier for individuals to come to terms with the powers that be, to align themselves with imperial expansion, than when the individuals are in direct contact with the situation themselves.[1]

If missions are to prove effective in accomplishing their purpose, to spread the gospel of love, and to help the world to live in the spirit of Christ, they will need to be strict in evaluating their accomplishments in the light of such attitudes as that of Gandhi, and to be willing to modify their methods in the light of these evaluations. What has been briefly suggested here is one opinion which is shared with many others concerned about this problem, of the direction in which mission methods will need to be modified, and the emphasis that will need to be made in the future if Christianity is to recommend itself to those of other faiths.

The Value of Gandhi as a Christianized Hindu

One of the problems which have received attention in the recent controversies regarding missions is that of the value of secondary Christian influences. Kraemer has denied any such value. But this is understandable in the light of his conception of Christianity as being a unique revelation of God to man and a faith in that revelation. However, for those who are concerned with Christianity as a way of life, the problem cannot be dismissed that easily.

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1 Ibid, pp. 194-195.

The influence of Christianity has left certain positive impressions on Gandhi. Still he is recognized as a Hindu. Whether his Christian traits are influencing Hinduism is an interesting problem, because it may prove the value of secondary Christian influences.

For one thing, Gandhi's attitude toward Jesus has become well known in India. His "open reverence for Christ and recognition of his debt to him has spread the influence of Jesus broadcast in India."[1] A prominent non-Christian judge once said, "India is being converted; the ideas that lie at the heart of the Gospel are slowly but steadily permeating the whole of Hindu society, modifying every phase of Hindu thought."[2] Undoubtedly Gandhi's influence has had much to do with this. Christians have long opposed untouchability, but it was only when Gandhi began to work against it that such great strides were taken. In five months in 1933, due to Gandhi's efforts one hundred and sixty Hindu temples were opened for worship to the untouchables for the first time. Some of these temples were strongholds of conservatism.[3] A statement by Blanche Watson,

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1 Anon. "Recent Changes in India," Missionary Review of the World, April 1924, p. 245.
2 Quoted in Yohan Masih, "Jesus Christ in the Thinking of Asia," Missionary Review of the World, April 1924, p. 252.
3 P.O. Philip, "Gandhi Seen as Near Christian," Christian Century, July 26, 1933, p. 962.

previously quoted, helps to strengthen the point. She writes, "Jesus is 'winning India' through Gandhi - and by that I mean the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of truth and love."[1]

In Re-Thinking Missions the opinion is expressed that Christianity is concerned in its criticisms of Hinduism in helping Hindus to rectify the abuses of their religion, and that "the Hindu can do far more toward any such reform than can he, the Christian, as an outsider."[2]

It would seem to be true, then, that Gandhi, a Hindu, recognized and followed by the masses in India, is doing an indirect service to Christianity, by passing on to India those aspects of Christianity which have appealed to him, and have influenced his thought. It would seem to be true, following this, that India would have much in common with Christianity, and would find it easier to accept it in the future than in the past. But even if this were not true, it would seem that any spreading of Christian ideals would be of value in itself.

Gandhi is indirectly, to this extent, helping the cause of Christian missions. Unless Christianity is interpreted narrowly, Gandhi's influence in India is of a unique value to Christian missions.

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1 Blanche Watson, "India Confronts the Christian Conscience," Christian Century, July 23, 1930, p. 918.
2 Re-Thinking Missions (New York, 1932) p. 40.

Summary

In closing, it may be of value to state the treatment and significant facts of the thesis in a brief summary. The first chapter stated the importance of the subject, showed the problems relating to the relationship of Gandhi and Christianity, discussed the sources, and outlined the method of treatment.

In the second chapter the Hindu influences that have been the strongest in Gandhi's life were noted. His mother's saintly character deeply touched his young life, and after her death his memory of her almost idealized her saintliness. The faith and forgiveness of his father, the beauty and moral purity of much of the Hindu literature which has solaced Gandhi in times of trial, bear deep marks of influence in his life. His Hindu friend, Raychandbhai, strengthened his faith in Hinduism when he was in doubt, and Gandhi found his spiritual home for sure in its tolerant attitude toward all religions.

But Christian influences, noted in chapter three, had their deep influence on his life also. Despite an early negative experience, Gandhi was drawn to Christianity through the Bible, Christian literature, especially that of Tolstoy and Ruskin, some of the lovely Christian hymns, but most of all by his Christian friends. Mr. A.W. Baker, and Mr. Coates were two evangelistic missionaries he met in South Africa,

who did not influence Gandhi very positively except by their faith in God. Mr. and Mrs. Walton were better liked by Gandhi because of their humility. Albert West and Henry Polak were two young journalists who helped Gandhi in his work in South Africa. The Doke family were very good to Gandhi, and he loved them very much. But C.F. Andrews, Gandhi's long-time friend, is like Gandhi's blood brother. They have much in common.

In chapter four, the points of contact and contrast between Gandhi's thought and Christianity were noted. They share common ground in their belief in the freedom of the spirit, in God as supreme and personal, in their conception of man as a son of God, the ethical nature of religion, and the religious imperative for social action. Their ideals for personal life are similar. But Gandhi and Christianity do not agree in many points. Gandhi has a national interpretation of religion which is based on his "swadeshi" principle, while Christianity believes in a universal religion. Their conceptions of religious truth are not in agreement, although Christians are not in any agreement among themselves either. Christ is not unique in Gandhi's thought. They differ in their conception of sin and salvation, and in their idea of God as working in history.

Gandhi's attitude toward Christianity was noted in chapter five. He does not like the finality of many Christian

beliefs. Many methods used in missions are objectionable to him, especially proselytizing. However, he is attracted to Jesus' life and teachings, and to many of his Christian friends. He recognizes Christianity's failures to live up to the spirit of Jesus, but nevertheless remains a friend of Christianity.

The attitudes of Christians toward Gandhi were mentioned in chapter six. Some feel that his religion is too nationalistic, and are sorry that he did not become a Christian. Others consider Gandhi as a near-Christian, one who is Christianizing Hinduism, and who is even interpreting Christianity to Christians by his practicing its principles in his personal life. His personal character and influence are valued by many.

In evaluating the thesis four points were considered. First, the influence of Gandhi's thought on Christianity was evaluated. Second, the directions and areas of Christian influence on Gandhi were noted. In the third place, the problem of the methods of Christian missions was considered in the light of Gandhi's criticisms. The conviction shared by many that mission methods were not Christian enough was expressed, and the need for a re-evaluation was claimed. The fourth point in this chapter considered the value of Gandhi as a Christianized Hindu. The opinion was expressed that even though he was a Hindu, he rendered Christianity a service by spreading the Christian influences that came into his life.

APPENDIX I

GANDHI'S DEFINITION OF "VARNA"[1]

In this statement of "varna" (a Sanskrit word meaning "color") Gandhi explains his attitude toward Caste.

"Varna means pre-determination of the choice of man's profession. The law of varna is that a man shall follow the profession of his ancestors for earning his livelihood. Every child naturally follows the 'colour' of his father, or chooses his father's profession. Varna, therefore, is in a way the law of heredity. Varna is not a thing that is superimposed on Hindus, but men who were trustees for their welfare discovered the law for them. It is not a human invention but an immutable law of nature--the statement of a tendency that is ever present and at work, like Newton's law of gravitation. Just as the law of gravitation existed even before it was discovered, so did that law. By their discovery and application of certain laws of nature the peoples of the West have easily increased their material possessions. Similarly, Hindus, by their discovery of this irresistible social tendency, have been able to achieve in the spiritual field what no other nation in the world has achieved.

Varna has nothing to do with Caste. Caste is an excrescence, just like untouchability, upon Hinduism. All the excrescences that are emphasized to-day were never part of Hinduism. But don't you find similar ugly excrescences in Christianity and Islam also?

Fight them as much as you like. Down with the monster of Caste that masquerades in the guise of varna. It is this travesty of varna that has degraded Hinduism and India. Our failure to follow the law of varna is largely responsible for both our economic and spiritual ruin. It is one cause of unemployment and impoverishment, and it is responsible for untouchability and defections from our faith.

But in quarrelling with the present monstrous form, and monstrous practices to which the original law has been reduced, do not fight the law itself."

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1 C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London 1929) pp. 354-5.

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